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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

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Karnataka Winter Session begins with just 110 MLAs in attendance

BELAGAVI, 8 DEC

The Winter Session of the Karnataka Legislature opened in Belagavi on Monday with notably thin attendance, as only about 100–110 MLAs were present in the 224-member Assembly when obituary references were taken up. The House, which met for only half a day, paid tributes to environmentalist Saalumarada Thimmakka, sitting Congress MLA HY Meti, former legislators RV Devaraj and Shivasharanappagouda Patil, and actor M S Umesh.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said the government had accepted Thimmakka's request for a museum in her name in Belur and would institute an award in her honour. He also announced plans for a memorial to novelist S L Bhyrappa in Mysuru. Speaker U T Khader urged MLAs to plant trees on the Suvarna Vidhana Soudha premises. The House was adjourned till Tuesday after a two-minute silence.

Earlier, police detained hundreds of Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti (MES) activists attempting to hold the banned Maha Melava. Leaders including former deputy mayor Renu Killekar, Shiv Sena's Prakash Shirulkar and former MLA Digambar Patil were among those detained across Belagavi, Khanapur and Nippani and later released. Police Commissioner Bhushan Borase said the action was necessary to prevent clashes after threats from Kannada groups. Retaliation followed across the border, where Shiv Sena workers in Kolhapur blocked Karnataka buses and pasted "Jai Maharashtra" stickers on them. Meanwhile, Excise Minister RB Timmapura said beer sales in Karnataka had dropped sharply due to heavy rain and cold weather, with sales falling 19.55 per cent to 195.27 lakh boxes till September. *—Salar News*

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CM Siddaramaiah addresses the Winter Session at Suvarna Vidhana Soudha, Belagavi, as Speaker UT Khader listens **PHOTO: SALAR**

CONG SUSPENDS NAVJOT'S WIFE FOR RS 500 CR BARB

CHANDIGARH, 8 DEC

The Punjab Congress on Monday suspended Navjot Kaur Sidhu from its primary membership after she triggered a political storm with her remark that "one who gives a suitcase of Rs 500 crore becomes the chief minister". Navjot Kaur, wife of former Punjab Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu, made the comments while speaking to reporters on Saturday.

She had said her husband would return to active politics if the Congress declared him its chief ministerial face, adding that the couple did not have the money to "give to any party" but could help transform Punjab into a "golden state". After meeting Governor Gulab Chand Kataria over what she described as deteriorating law and order, she reiterated, "We always speak for Punjab and Punjabiyat... but we do not have Rs 500 crore to sit in the chief minister's chair." Asked whether anyone had demanded money, she replied that no such demand had been made but asserted that "the one who gives a suitcase of Rs 500 crore becomes the CM". Following the row, Navjot Kaur later claimed her straightforward remarks had been distorted. *—PTI*

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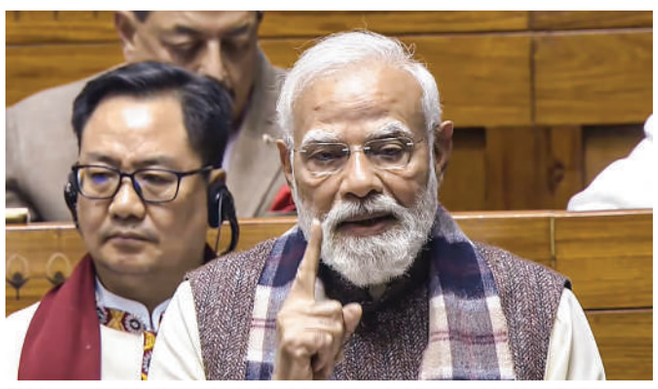
Decades on, Nehru blamed for Vande Mataram in LS

The debate takes centre stage ahead of Bengal polls

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

A Lok Sabha debate marking 150 years of 'Vande Mataram' turned into a sharp political showdown, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi accusing Jawaharlal Nehru of "betraying" the national song and the Congress countering that the BJP was using Nehru to divert attention from governance failures and the upcoming Bengal elections.

Launching the discussion, Prime Minister Narendra Modi claimed India's first Prime Minister had "betrayed" 'Vande Mataram'; by echoing Muhammad Ali Jinnah's objections in 1937 and fragmenting Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's iconic composition. Modi argued that the Congress's decision to adopt only the first two stanzas amounted to "appeasement politics", which he linked to the eventual Partition. He cited Mahatma Gandhi's early praise for the song and recalled that the Congress Working Committee reviewed its use at its 1937 Kolkata session, prompting public outrage at the time.



PM Narendra Modi speaks in the LS on 'Vande Mataram' in New Delhi. Congress called him a 'distorian' for 'distorting history' **PHOTO: PTI**

Modi said Muslim League leader Jinnah had objected to the song on 15 October 1937, and asserted that Nehru, instead of countering him, acknowledged the concerns in a letter to Subhas Chandra Bose. The prime minister said the Congress "bowed" to the Muslim League and accused the party of "outsourcing" its decision-making.

The remarks triggered sharp pushback from the Opposition benches. Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said it was "weird" that Parliament was debating the national song at all. She alleged the government was doing so to influence Bengal ahead of Assembly polls and to "divert attention from burning issues".

"Like you are having this discussion today, let's have a discussion on the mistakes of Nehru, Indira ji, Rajiv ji, what dynasty politics. Let it continue for 24 hours, 40 hours, for as long as you are not satisfied. Let us finish it once and for all," she said. "Then let us talk on unemployment. On what is going on in the PMO, what is happening in the PMO on a betting racket, the name of one of your minister appearing in the Epstein files." *—PTI*

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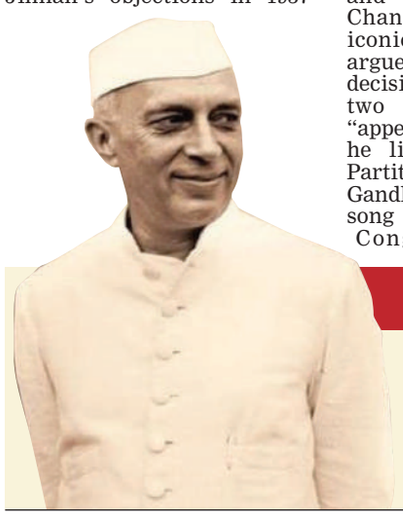


CONG POSES 3 QUESTIONS TO 'DISTORIAN' PM

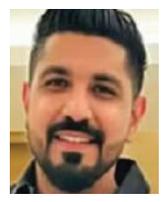
1. Which Indian leader formed a coalition in Bengal in the early 1940s with the person who moved the Pakistan resolution in Lahore in March 1940? It was Syama Prasad Mookerjee.
2. Which Indian leader applauded Jinnah in Karachi in June 2005? It was LK Advani.
3. Which Indian leader praised Jinnah in his book 2009? It was Jaswant Singh.

Goa club owners flee to Phuket

PANAJI, 8 DEC

Goa Police on Monday said nightclub owners Saurabh Luthra and Gaurav Luthra, the main accused in the massive blaze that killed 25 people, fled to Phuket just hours after the tragedy. An FIR was registered against them and a Look Out Circular was issued by December 7 by the Bureau of Intelligence at the request of Goa Police.

The Goa government has set up a four-member magisterial inquiry committee to determine the circumstances that led to the fire at 'Birch by Romeo Lane' in Arpora. Early findings suggest that fireworks likely triggered the blaze. The panel will be chaired by North Goa District Collector Ankit Yadav, according to an order issued by Under Secretary (Home) Manthan Manoj Naik.



Police have so far arrested the club's Chief General Manager Rajiv Modak, General Manager Vivek Singh, Bar Manager Rajiv Singhania, and Gate Manager Riyanshu Thakur. The Luthra brothers remain absconding.

A Goa Police team visited the brothers' residence in Hudson Lane, Delhi, on Monday, but they were not found there. In a related development, Delhi Police arrested nightclub employee Bharat Kohli, a resident of Sabzi Mandi, who handled daily operations at the Goa property. Meanwhile, the North Goa district administration has sealed a beach shack and another club linked to the Romeo Lane chain at Vagator and Assagao as part of its ongoing action. *— PTI*

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TRAINER AIRCRAFT CRASHES IN MP

SEONI, 8 DEC

A trainer aircraft belonging to Redbird Aviation crashed near Amgaon in Madhya Pradesh's Seoni district after hitting a 33kV power line on 8 December.

The incident occurred around 6.25pm, approximately 2 kilometres from Suktara airstrip. The pilot, Ajit Chavda, and another occupant sustained injuries but are reported to be out of danger after receiving treatment at a private hospital in Barapathar. Eyewitnesses noted a loud explosion and flying sparks as the aircraft's wings collided with the power lines, causing the lines to snap and resulting in widespread power outages affecting 80 to 90 villages. *—PTI*

Starlink to cost ₹8,600, offers 30-day free trail

NEW DELHI, 8 NOV

Starlink, Elon Musk's satellite internet venture, has announced pricing for its India residential plan as it prepares for a wider rollout after recent regulatory progress. The updated Starlink India website lists the monthly subscription at Rs 8,600, with a one-time hardware cost of Rs 34,000. The package offers unlimited data and a 30-day trial. Starlink says its kit is easy to install, requiring only a plug-in setup, and promises over 99.9 per cent uptime with performance engineered for all weather conditions, targeting households in remote and underserved areas where reliable broadband remains scarce. ***—Salar News***

CM gets SC notice on his win from Varuna

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

The Supreme Court on Monday issued notice to Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on a plea challenging his 2023 election from the Varuna assembly constituency. A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta sought his response to a petition filed by K Shankara, a voter from the constituency, who alleged that the Congress' "five guarantees" amounted to "corrupt practice" under the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

The court asked the petitioner's counsel how an election manifesto could constitute corrupt practice. The lawyer said a similar issue is pending before another bench and cited the Supreme Court's 2013 judgment, which held that promises in a manifesto cannot be treated as corrupt practice under Section 123 of the Act, though freebies do influence voters. A larger three-judge bench is currently reconsidering that verdict.

Shankara has challenged the Karnataka High Court's 22 April order dismissing his petition seeking to void Siddaramaiah's election. He argued that the guarantees were a form of "gratification" meant to induce voters and claimed such freebies harm public finances.

Before the High Court, Siddaramaiah said the petition lacked material facts and reiterated that manifesto promises do not constitute corrupt practice. The High Court had relied on the 2013 Supreme Court ruling to uphold that position. *—PTI*

Will set example: Govt on Indigo

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

IndiGo cancelled 562 more flights on Monday across six major airports, including 150 from Bengaluru, as the airline continued to struggle with a week-long operational crisis, sources said. The disruption, which began last Tuesday, has triggered nationwide passenger chaos and mounting pressure on the country's largest carrier.

In the Rajya Sabha, Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu said the government had launched an inquiry into the mass cancellations and vowed "very, very strict action" against IndiGo, saying the airline had failed to manage its crew and duty rosters. The action, he said, would also set example to other operators.

Naidu clarified that the new Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL)—revised after a High Court order in April 2025—contained 22 guidelines, of which 15 were implemented on 1 July and the remaining seven on 1 November.

Passengers try to find their luggage in New Delhi on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

The airline's board also faced public criticism, with many questioning why directors were "sleeping" as the crisis escalated. IndiGo said it had constituted a Crisis Management Group (CMG) during a board meeting on 4 December, which now meets daily to oversee operations. The carrier said it had so far refunded Rs 827 crore and returned 4,500 bags to affected passengers. *—PTI*

SC orders 30% seats for women advocates in state Bar Councils

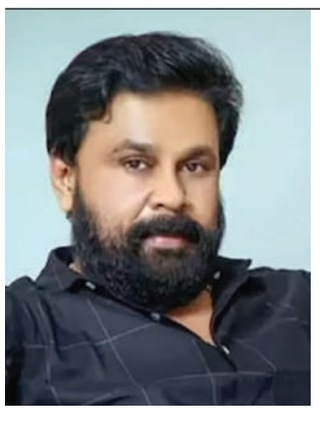
NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

The Supreme Court on Monday directed that 30 per cent of seats in State Bar Councils, where elections have not yet begun, must be reserved for women advocates this year.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi said that in councils where polls are still pending, 20 per cent of the seats should be filled through elections contested by women, while the remaining 10 per cent may be filled through co-option if there are not enough candidates willing to stand.

Senior advocate Manan Kumar Mishra, chairperson of the Bar Council of India (BCI), informed the court that the BCI supports a minimum 30 per cent reservation for women across all State Bar Councils. He proposed allowing councils to fill 15 per cent of the seats through co-option this year, but the bench limited co-option to 10 per cent.

The court said no reservation would apply in councils where the election process has already commenced. In Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Telangana — where polls have been notified — women candidates will contest under existing rules. For all remaining State Bar Councils, the Supreme Court mandated that women must occupy 30 per cent of the seats, with 20 per cent elected and 10 per cent co-opted. *—PTI*



NO RELIEF FOR PULSAR SUNI

Kerala actor Dileep acquitted in rape case; 6 guilty

KOCHI, 8 DEC

A Kerala court on Monday acquitted Malayalam actor Dileep in the 2017 sexual assault case involving a south Indian actress, while convicting six others, including prime accused Sunil NS alias Pulsar Suni. Three more accused were also acquitted.

Ernakulam Principal Sessions Judge Honey M Varghese delivered the verdict in a packed courtroom, nearly two weeks after concluding the lengthy trial on 25 November. The state government said it will appeal, with Law Minister P Rajeev stating that the survivor "did not get complete justice".

Convicted on all counts were Sunil, Martin Antony, Manikandan B, Vijesh V P, Salim H and Pradeep — the first six accused. They were charged under IPC Sections 120A, 120B, 109, 342, 366, 354, 354B, 357, 376D, 201, 212 and 34. The court will consider sentencing on 12 December.

The case stems from the 17 February, 2017, assault, when a group of men allegedly forced their way into the actor's car, confined her for two hours, recorded visuals of the assault, and fled in a busy locality an incident that shocked Kerala. Police arrested several accused soon after and filed the first charge sheet in April 2017.

Over the course of the trial, 261 witnesses were examined — including many from the Malayalam film industry, several of whom turned hostile. *—PTI*

Will go by rules: Horatti on no-trust motion

Cong MLC Nagaraj Yadav accused Legislative Council Chairman of alleged irregularities in recruitment

BELAGAVI, 8 DEC

Amid speculation about the ruling Congress planning to move a no-confidence motion against him, Legislative Council Chairman Basavaraj Horatti on Monday said he will abide by the decision of the House, and go by the rules regarding the matter.

Horatti also clarified that he had resigned from the BJP as soon as he was elected as the Chairman in 2022.

Sources said the Congress wants to have its own member as the Chairman, with the numbers now stacked in its favour in the upper House of the legislature.

In the 75-member Council, there are 37 Congress members, an equal number for the NDA (including the Chairman) and an independent, Lakhan Jarkiholi, who is believed to be inclined towards the Congress.

Meanwhile, according to official sources, the Chairman left for Bengaluru on Monday.

Congress MLC Nagaraj Yadav has accused Horratti of partisan conduct and alleged irregularities in connection with recruitment to the Council office.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah with Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka ahead of the Winter Session at Suvarna Vidhana Soudha in Belagavi on Monday; Pakodas being fried on the first day of the session **PHOTO: SALAR**

Rejecting Yadav's allegations of irregularities in connection with direct recruitment to the Legislative Council secretariat, as it was allegedly in violation of rules, Horatti said he would not occupy the chair even for a minute if the charges are proved.

"Recruitment was conducted through the Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA)," he said.

Regarding allegations of him being partisan, Horatti said that although he was elected from the BJP, he had resigned from the party when he was elected to the Chairman post.

Regarding the allegation relating to his handling of a tussle between Minister Laxmi Hebbalkar and BJP MLC CT Ravi during the session in Belagavi last year, the Chairman said he had set up a committee to look into it.

Minister KH Muniyappa informed the Council on Monday that 570 people have been arrested for the illegal hoarding and sale of 'Anna Bhagya' scheme rice.

The Minister, who holds the Food, Civil Supplies & Consumer Affairs and Legal Metrology portfolio, was replying to MLC CT Ravi. *—PTI*

Priyank blames BJP for farmers' woes

BELAGAVI, 8 DEC

Minister Priyank Kharge on Monday criticised the BJP ahead of the Assembly session, alleging that the party has abandoned its responsibilities as an opposition and is instead focusing only on trivial issues. Priyank accused the BJP of overlooking issues under the Centre's responsibility, citing the maize procurement cap and sugarcane pricing. He said the party is ignoring the MSP for maize and the FRP for sugarcane, both set by the central government.

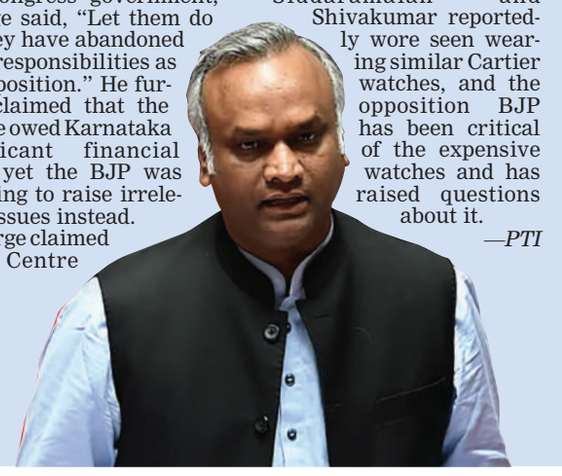
> **They owe the state Rs 13,000 crore under the Jal Jeevan Mission and the 15th Finance Commission allocation for MGNREGA**
>
> - Priyank Kharge, IT-BT Minister

When asked about the opposition's plan to target the Congress government, Kharge said, "Let them do it. They have abandoned their responsibilities as an opposition." He further claimed that the Centre owed Karnataka significant financial dues, yet the BJP was choosing to raise irrelevant issues instead.

Kharge claimed the Centre owes Karnataka significant dues, yet the BJP focuses on trivial matters instead.

"They owe the state Rs 13,000 crore under the Jal Jeevan Mission and the 15th Finance Commission allocation for MGNREGA, but they will only talk about the watches worn by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy DK Sivakumar.

Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar reportedly wore seen wearing similar Cartier watches, and the opposition BJP has been critical of the expensive watches and has raised questions about it. *—PTI*



Minister defends BIMS doctors, says there was no negligence

BELAGAVI, 8 DEC

A case concerning Belagavi Institute of Medical Sciences (BIMS) hospital came up for discussion during the Question Hour in the Legislative Council on Monday.

Member M Nagaraju urged the government to act against the doctors responsible for a surgical lapse, where they allegedly removed the intestine instead of a tumour. Minister for Medical Education, Skill Development, Entrepreneurship and Livelihood, Dr Sharanprakash Patil, clarified that no negligence had occurred.

He said the patient had a history of alcohol and tobacco addiction. The letter from the taluk hospital indicated suspected appendicular perforation. After routine exams doctors confirmed appendicular perforation.

During the surgery on 20 June 2025, a laparotomy was performed and the appendix was found swollen. The intestines were examined and were found normal, and were not removed, he said.

Despite medical advice, the patient's attendants discharged him against medical advice on 22 June 2025, the minister added. *—Agencies*

1 held for illegally transporting beef in Mandya

MANDYA, 8 DEC

A driver was arrested for allegedly transporting beef and other cattle material illegally in a goods vehicle in this district, police said on Monday. The vehicle was seized during a late-night operation near Paschimavahini in Srirangapatna taluk on Sunday. Police said the vehicle, which was reportedly travelling from Hunsur to Ramanagara, was first stopped by a Hindu organisation, which then alerted the police. The Srirangapatna Town Police reached the spot and took the vehicle into custody. Police found beef and the legs of cattle inside the goods carrier. The driver was detained, a senior police officer said. Samples of the seized meat have been sent for forensic examination, he added. A case under the Karnataka Prevention of Cow Slaughter and Cattle Preservation Act was registered at the Srirangapatna Town Police Station, and an investigation is underway to trace the source and destination of the consignment, they said. *—PTI*

'Will not be part of Cabinet if DKS is CM'

BELAGAVI, 8 DEC

Senior Congress MLA KN Rajanna on Monday said he will not be part of a DK Shivakumar-led Cabinet in case the latter becomes the Chief Minister, amid speculation about the leadership change in Karnataka.

Asserting that Siddaramaiah was elected as the leader of the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) through a secret ballot and the leadership issue cannot arise until he resigns, the former minister pitched for Home Minister G Parameshwara, a Dalit, for the coveted post, in case of change of guard.

"I will not be part of his (DK Shivakumar) Cabinet if he becomes (the CM)," Rajanna said in response to a question by reporters here.

Asked about the leadership change issue, the former minister, who is close to CM Siddaramaiah, said the CLP leader was elected by the MLAs through a secret ballot for five years. "If he (Siddaramaiah) resigns from the CLP leadership, then the question of a new candidate will arise. Till such time, there is no such thing," he said.

The power tussle within the ruling party had intensified amid speculation about a change in Chief Minister in the State, after the Congress Government reached the halfway mark of its five-year term on 20 November. The speculation was fuelled by an alleged "power-sharing" agreement involving Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar in 2023. *—PTI*

Will abide by top brass: CM on power tussle

BELAGAVI, 8 DEC

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah reiterated that he will abide by the Congress high command's decision on the leadership change issue in the state.

The CM has been repeatedly stating that he and the Deputy CM, DK Shivakumar, will go by what the high command decides.

"We will go by whatever the high command decides," Siddaramaiah told reporters while answering a question on his son Congress MLC Yathindra Siddaramaiah's statement that there is no question of a leadership change.

Earlier in the day, Yathindra claimed that the high command has said that there is no leadership change in the state.

"I have been saying this, which is not new. I feel that, as of now, there is nothing like leadership change. I hope that he (Siddaramaiah) will complete his five-year term," Yathindra told reporters at the Suvarna Vidhana Soudha here.

On being asked about Siddaramaiah being asked to come to Delhi in January, Yathindra said the high command calls the chief minister to discuss various issues.

Yathindra also admitted that there was confusion over the leadership issue as "The deputy Chief minister was asked whether he wants to be the CM. The high command said that they will not decide it now."

Yathindra said the Congress Legislative Party (CLP) elects a candidate for a definite term. *— PTI*

Pvt hospitals warned against too many C-sections

BELAGAVI, 8 DEC

State Minister for Health and Family Welfare, Dinesh Gundu Rao, has issued a stern warning to private hospitals regarding the performance of unnecessary caesarean deliveries for financial gain. This statement was made in response to JD(S) member Govinda Raju's query in the Legislative Council.

Minister Rao noted that while no specific private hospitals have been identified for conducting unnecessary C-sections, the District Karnataka Private Medical Establishment (KPME) Registration and Grievance Redressal Authority has yet to receive any public complaints on the matter.

He stated, "If complaints are received, action will be taken against the private hospital that violated the rules, under Section 15 Clause 1 of the KPME Act." Rao underscored the importance of adherence to established protocols for examining pregnant women, asserting that both government and private hospitals must comply with the regulations, with potential consequences for non-compliance. *—PTI*

3 family members found dead in B'luru, suicide suspected

BENGALURU, 8 DEC

The bodies of three family members were discovered in their home in Sudduguntepalya on Monday morning, with police suspecting a tragic case of suicide. The deceased have been identified as Muddamma, 68, her daughter Sudha, 38, and grandson Mounish, 14.

Upon arrival at the scene, officers found all three individuals deceased inside the dwelling. Initial examinations revealed no visible injuries; early investigations indicate they may have died after ingesting poison. While no suicide note was located, inquiries have revealed that the family had been grappling with substantial debts stemming from financial losses in their small businesses over time.

Sudha, who had been separated from her husband, resided with her mother and son. According to police sources, both Sudha and her mother were employed as domestic workers to support their household. "The family faced increasing financial pressure," an officer stated, shedding light on their dire circumstances.

The bodies have been dispatched for post-mortem examinations, with the autopsy results pending to determine the precise cause of death. Authorities are conducting further investigations into the incident. *—PTI*

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support.

CM seat for sale: DKS tells Navjot to check into a mental hospital

BENGALURU, 8 DEC

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar issued a fiery response to Congress leader Navjot Kaur Sidhu, publicly suggesting she be committed to a mental health facility for her explosive "Rs 500 crore for CM post" remark.

Navjot Kaur Sidhu, wife of former Punjab Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu, had triggered a row on Saturday by claiming that "one who gives a suitcase of Rs 500 crore becomes the Chief Minister," drawing strong response from the BJP and AAP over Congress's functioning.

Responding to the controversial comment made over the weekend, Shivkumar, who is also the state Congress president, said, "Let her be admitted to a hospital, some good mental hospital."

The exchange follows Sidhu's attempt to walk back her original claim. On Sunday evening, Sidhu who is also the wife of former Punjab Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu, posted a statement on X, claiming a "twist was given to a straight comment." She clarified that her party had never demanded money from them, but reiterated her family simply had "no money to offer for a CM post."

Navjot Kaur Sidhu with husband and former Punjab Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu **PHOTO: ANI**

Sidhu had said her husband will return to active politics if the Congress declares him as the party's chief ministerial face in Punjab, ahead of the 2027 polls there. She further said they do not have money to give to any party but can transform Punjab into a 'golden state'. *—PTI*

MAN GETS LIFER FOR RAPING MOTHER

8 DEC, CHIKKABALLAPUR

The 1st Additional District and Sessions Judge of Chikkaballapur, Justice Kantharaju, has handed Life Imprisonment to an accused who raped his own mother in 4 August, 2024, at Chinnahalli village in Gudibande taluk of Chikkaballapur district. Ashoka allegedly dragged his 60-year-old mother Ramakka to a nearby garbage heap near their house and raped her.

On the night of the incident, Ramakka was sleeping outside the house while her husband Krishnappa was sleeping inside, during which time Ashoka who came in an inebriated condition began a quarrel with the parents. He hit his father Krishnappa and later dragged mother Ramakka to a distance near the garbage heap, where he assaulted her and subsequently raped her.

The case came up before the 1st Additional District and Sessions Judge who after hearing both the parties found Ashoka guilt of raping his mother and sentenced him to life imprisonment besides a Rs 25,000 fine. *—Salar News*

Mysuru bizman kidnapped For Rs 30L rescued in 4 hrs

MYSURU, 8 DEC

A city-based realtor kidnapped for ransom in Vijayanagar was rescued within four hours on Monday after a swift operation by the local police. Five men known to the victim, Lokesh of Vijayanagar Fourth Stage, were arrested.

Police said the accused, HM Santosh, HS Abhishekh, R Prajwal, Darshan and Preetham, abducted Lokesh on the night of 6 December while he was returning home on his two-wheeler. The gang, who had been trailing him in a car, attacked him when he stopped to take a phone call, threw chilli powder in his eyes, bundled him into their vehicle and drove off.

Prajwal later called Lokesh's wife, initially demanding Rs 1 crore for his release. She negotiated the amount down to Rs 30 lakh and simultaneously filed a complaint with Vijayanagar Police.

Inspector D Sureshkumar formed multiple teams, which tracked the suspects to Hampapura in KR Nagara taluk. Four accused, Santosh, Prajwal, Darshan and Abhishekh, were arrested on Sunday night, and Lokesh was rescued unharmed from the car. Preetham was caught separately in Vijayanagar when he arrived to collect the ransom. All five have been remanded to judicial custody. *—Salar News*

THE RISING SUMMIT

Bengaluru, Hyderabad will build better India: DKS

HYDERABAD, 8 DEC

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Monday said Bengaluru and Hyderabad are not competitors, but they can support each other as major technology hubs, to build a better India.

Shivakumar, who spoke at the two-day Telangana Rising Global Summit organised by the state government here, also said the country would rise further when the southern states make rapid progress. He said that he thought Telangana is competing with Bengaluru and Karnataka, but it is not so. The state is competing "globally".

Shivakumar, who congratulated Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy for completing two years in office, said the entire South stands with him for the progress of the country "to match the world".

"Today, I am not here only as Deputy Chief Minister of Karnataka, but as a proud voice for bidding the South... I could see the vision you (Telangana) have. It is a global vision. I know Telangana is a small state, not like Karnataka," he said.

- Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said that he thought Telangana is competing with Bengaluru and Karnataka, but it is not so. The state is competing "globally".

The IT exports from Bengaluru are about 43 per cent of total exports from the country and Telangana could be little less.

However, the Telangana government's vision is big and he was glad to attend the event, he said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Meitei MLA visits Kuki relief camp in Manipur

IMPHAL, 8 DEC

MLA Yumnam Khemchand Singh visited a Kuki relief camp, marking the first cross-community outreach by a Meitei legislator to Kuki-dominated areas since the ethnic conflict began in May 2023. Singh, who represents the Singjamei constituency in Imphal West, visited a camp at Litan Sareikhong and interacted with the Kuki inmates, urging them to pray for peace and emphasizing that the communities must learn to live in harmony for the sake of their children's future. The state has been under President's Rule since February, after BJP leader N Biren Singh resigned amid criticisms. Over 260 people have been killed and thousands displaced in the clashes between the Kuki and Meitei communities, which have deeply divided the state on ethnic lines. *—PTI*

Gita recital was BJP event, so didn't attend: Didi

KOLKATA, 8 DEC

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee justified her absence from the Bhagavad Gita recitation event by asserting that the programme was directly linked to the BJP. Invitations to the Sanatan Sanskriti Sansad organised event had been extended to both the Chief Minister and Governor CV Ananda Bose. While Bose attended, Banerjee remained absent. Banerjee's absence drew criticism from Opposition Leader Suvendu Adhikari, who said a "true Hindu" would not skip such an event. Responding to reporters, Banerjee said she would have attended if the programme had been impartial, asserting that she does not attend events organised by people who hate Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and do not follow the ideals of Mahatma. *—PTI*

SC relaxes bail conditions for Senthil Balaji

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

The Supreme Court on Monday said that, unless summoned, former Tamil Nadu minister V Senthil Balaji is not required to appear before an ED officer twice per week. The Senthil Balaji scam case involves allegations of money laundering connected to a cash-for-jobs scam that occurred while he was the transport minister in 2011-2016. On 14 November, the top court agreed to examine Balaji's plea seeking relaxation of his bail conditions. In his plea, Balaji sought modification of two conditions in the bail order. The SC relaxed the other condition requiring him to appear in the trial court on every date of hearing, stating that the presiding officer may consider his plea for exemption on merits if such an application is moved. *—PTI*

TVK finds new venue for Erode meeting

ERODE, 7 DEC

KA Sengottaiyan, chief coordinator of the Tamilaga Vetri Kazhagam (TVK), announced on Monday that the party has identified an alternative site to host a public meeting in Erode on 16 December, following the police's refusal to grant permission for the original location in Pavalathampalayam. "I have not yet received any information or communication, either from the police or Revenue department about the denial of permission for conducting a meeting by Tamilaga Vetri Kazhagam president Vijay on 16 December at Pavalathampalayam area on a seven-acre site. I noticed the refusal of permission through the print and visual media," Sengottaiyan told reporters. *—PTI*

Oppn questions Vande Mataram debate

Leaders flag issues such as Indigo crisis; accuse BJP of being 'Bengali haters'

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra speaks in the Lok Sabha during the Winter session of Parliament, in New Delhi, on Monday PHOTO: PTI

Priyanka defended the 1937 decision to adopt only the first two stanzas, pointing out that it reflected the views of leaders such as Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Subhas Chandra Bose, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Rajendra Prasad and Dr BR Ambedkar. "Have ruling party MPs become so arrogant they consider themselves greater than these leaders?" she asked, notably omitting Nehru's name. She added that by turning the national song into a source of division, the BJP was committing a "big sin".

Left parties accused the government of using the issue for polarisation. CPI MP P Sandosh said the BJP wanted to "divide people further" and was using the Bengal elections as a pretext. TMC MP Kalyan Banerjee criticised Modi's tone towards Bankim Chandra, calling it "disturbing", and accused the BJP of being "Bengali haters".

Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi said Modi had mentioned "Nehru and Congress" 91 times during recent debates, adding that the BJP's efforts would not "put even one blot on Nehru's contribution". In Kolkata, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee asked pointedly: "You don't appreciate Netaji, Tagore, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, then whom do you appreciate?"

Congress MP Imraan Masood questioned the BJP's claim over 'Vande Mataram': "Which RSS leader sang this, went to jail, raised slogans?" he asked, asserting that Congress workers carried the song "through prison, protest and struggle". Rajeev Shukla said the government's sudden enthusiasm was linked to Bengal, accusing it of consistently "abusing Nehru" and "insulting Tagore".

RJD MP Ranjit Ranjan criticised the government's priorities, asking why Parliament was debating a song while people faced airport chaos and soaring travel costs. PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti said Parliament's focus on a "two-hundred-year-old debate" was misplaced when IndiGo passengers were stranded nationwide.

Congress leader Husain Dalwai said it was an attempt to divert attention. *—PTI*

> **Vande Mataram is not to show off, nor is it a political tool. When we listen to them, they make it sound as if they created the verse**
>
> -Akhilesh Yadav, Samajwadi Party leader

1,191 posts vacant in Sports Authority, says Sports Minister

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

Sports Minister **Mansukh Mandaviya** on Monday acknowledged that around 1,000 posts are lying vacant in the Sports Authority of India (SAI), a concern that was highlighted in a Parliamentary Standing Committee report, which had described the body as underfunded and understaffed. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on sports, headed by Congress' Rajya Sabha MP Digvijaya Singh, observed that about 45 per cent of posts in SAI are vacant. *—PTI*

ED attaches Rs 4,189.8 cr in crypto cases

ED has attached proceeds worth **Rs 4,189.89** crore in crypto-related cases under the anti-money laundering law & declared one accused as a Fugitive Economic Offender.

Ramesh flags concerns over NTA, NAAC

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

Senior Congress leader **Jairam Ramesh** on Monday highlighted significant concerns raised by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, which released its 371st report on the autonomous bodies under the Higher Education Department.

Chaired by Congress MP Digvijaya Singh, the committee has recommended a sweeping set of reforms aimed at strengthening India's higher education governance.

In a post shared on X, Ramesh drew attention to the panel's strong criticism of the National Testing Agency (NTA).

The committee has also raised red flags about the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), recommending a detailed white paper on the irregularities detected in NAAC and a review of the measures taken so far to reform the organisation. *—PTI*

AAP leader calls India's toll collection 'organised loot'

AAP leader Raghav Chadha called the country's highway toll collection an 'organised loot', says mismanagement and excessive charges were placing an 'unbearable' burden on commuters.

Parliament passes Bill to levy cess on pan masala

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman speaks in the Rajya Sabha during the Winter session of Parliament, in New Delhi PHOTO: PTI

Parliament on Monday approved a Bill to impose a cess on pan masala manufacturers to raise funds for national security and public health.

Rajya Sabha returned the Health Security se National Security Cess Bill, 2025, to the Lok Sabha, which had cleared it on 5 December .

The proposed Health and National Security Cess, will be over and above GST, levied on the production capacity of machines in pan masala manufacturing factories. Currently, pan masala, tobacco and related products attract 28 per cent GST plus a compensation cess at varied rate. With the end of the compensation cess levy, the GST rate will go up to 40 per cent.

Under the new Bill, the government can raise the current rate, as long as it stays within the maximum limit that.

On the need for the cess, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that it is intended to cover the cost of national and health security.

- Under the new Bill, the government can raise the current rate, as long as it stays within the maximum limit that.

"It is not going to be on any essential commodities; it will apply only to demerit goods," she said. The country needs a steady flow of revenue to keep the defence forces fighting fit, she added, noting that "the power to tax arises only in an emergency situation.

The Minister also reported that states received Rs 18.54 lakh crore in tax devolution during the UPA period, compared with Rs 71 lakh crore under 10 years of the NDA. Although cess collections were Rs 12,000 crore, Rs 13,327 crore was still disbursed to states. *—PTI*

SC grants bail, bans reinstatement of prof

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

The Supreme Court of India has granted bail to Md Joynal Abedin, a former professor at Gossaigaon College in Assam, who was arrested over anti-India social media posts. However, the court advised that this bail should not lead to his reinstatement due to serious allegations of molestation against female students.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi expressed concerns, labelling Abedin as "perverted" and "a threat to young girls." The Court highlighted that Abedin is also implicated in two other cases concerning the harassment of female students and making inappropriate remarks online.

The bail, granted after over six months of incarceration and the anticipation of a lengthy trial, mandates Abedin to be present for all court hearings. CJI Kant reiterated the importance of maintaining his suspension from the college, stating, "What kind of professor are you? You should not be allowed to enter the college." Abedin had challenged the refusal of bail by the Court, claiming delays in initiating his trial due to a lack of judicial officers. *—PTI*

Suspended TMC MLA says won't quit

MURSHIDABAD, 8 DEC

Suspended Trinamool Congress (TMC) MLA **Humayun Kabir** reversed his earlier decision to resign from the West Bengal Assembly, stating his constituents urged him to stay.

"There is no question of my resignation now. Respecting their wishes, I have withdrawn my resignation decision," Kabir explained. He had initially planned to resign on 17 December ahead of launching a new political party on 22 December.

This change of heart followed the foundation stone-laying ceremony he conducted for a mosque styled after the Babri Masjid on December 6 in Murshidabad, which attracted substantial public support. "I got massive support from people after the foundation stone was laid. That support has strengthened my resolve," he said.

Amid rising tensions surrounding his actions, the TMC announced they would adjust Kabir's seating arrangement in the Assembly to distance him from other party members. TMC's chief whip Nirmal Ghosh confirmed the party was "monitoring the situation closely."

Meanwhile, donations exceeding Rs 1.30 crore have reportedly been raised for the mosque, with public contributions both online and in cash. Kabir stated that even bricks were being brought to the site by supporters. He claimed the response had "exceeded all expectations," and discussions for safe handling of the collected funds were underway.

TMC leaders accused Kabir of fostering communal polarisation, citing his mosque plan as provocative act. *—PTI*

People carry bricks to lay the foundation stone for a mosque, modelled on Ayodhya's Babri Masjid, in West Bengal PHOTO: PTI

2 held for forging signatures in Uttar Pradesh SIR

SAHARANPUR, 8 DEC

The police have registered a case and arrested two individuals in connection with the alleged forging of signatures during the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in Saharanpur district.

Chilkana Station House Officer Vinod Kumar confirmed to PTI that the incident occurred in Choura Kala village within the Nakur assembly constituency. The verification process was conducted on 30 November by Block Education Officer Sanjay Dabral. During this process, census forms submitted to Booth Level Officer (BLO) Shamim Ahmed were physically verified at the residences of the electors.

Upon arriving at the home of elector Samoon, the officials were informed by his brother Akram that Samoon had been working in Saudi Arabia for the past three years and had not returned to the village. Kumar indicated that the census form submitted under the Special Intensive Revision bore signatures that were determined to be forgeries made by a close relative, not by Samoon himself. *—PTI*

Woman candidate dies days before Kerala civic polls

MALAPPURAM, 8 DEC

Tragedy has struck the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) as Vattath Haseena, a woman candidate contesting in the upcoming local body elections, passed away just days before the polls. Family sources confirmed that Haseena was standing for election in the 7th ward of Payimpadam in Moothedam village panchayat, where voting is set to take place on 11 December.

On the day of her death, Haseena actively participated in campaigning, visiting households in her constituency. However, upon returning home, she experienced severe chest pains and collapsed. Despite being swiftly taken to a nearby private hospital, she could not be saved.

The district of Malappuram is among the seven regions preparing for the second phase of the crucial local body elections, with the first phase scheduled for Tuesday. Haseena's death adds a sombre note to the upcoming electoral event, prompting condolences from fellow party members. *—PTI*

22 Mahayuti MLAs ready to cross over, says Aaditya

NAGPUR, 8 DEC

Shiv Sena (UBT) legislator **Aaditya Thackeray** on Monday claimed that 22 MLAs from a Mahayuti ally have "grown close" to Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and are ready to switch sides, an oblique reference to Deputy CM Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena.

In June 2022, the Shiv Sena split following a rebellion led by Shinde, resulting in the collapse of the then Uddhav Thackeray-led Maha Vikas Aghadi government.

Later, in January 2024, Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar held that the Eknath Shinde-led faction was the "real" Shiv Sena, which is a constituent of the ruling Mahayuti in the state along with the BJP and Deputy CM Ajit Pawar's NCP.

"There is one party and two factions on the treasury side. 22 MLAs from one faction have grown close to the CM. They have funds and have started dancing to the CM's tune," Aaditya Thackeray claimed, without naming the Shinde-led Shiv Sena.

He also said that someone from these 22 legislators calls himself "vice-captain," a veiled reference to Industries Minister Uday Samant. *—PTI*

'CANNOT ROLLOUT RED CARPET'

Verify identity before hiring: Yogi cautions against 'infiltrators'

LUCKNOW, 8 DEC

Chief Minister **Yogi Adityanath** on Monday urged citizens to remain alert and get identity verification done before employing someone, asserting that Uttar Pradesh has launched strict and decisive action against illegal immigrants to safeguard security and social balance.

His appeal comes amid an ongoing crackdown against infiltrators across the state following his instructions to the authorities last week.

In a post on X, Adityanath said, "The honourable Supreme Court has made an extremely important remark during a hearing that a red carpet cannot be laid out for infiltrators. This makes it clear that infiltrators are not acceptable at any cost."

He said resources belong to citizens and not to illegal immigrants, underlining that maintaining security, social equilibrium and a strong law and order system in the state remains his government's top priority.

The Supreme Court on 2 December sharply questioned the legal status of Rohingyas living in India and asked whether "intruders" should be given a "red carpet welcome" while the country's own citizens grapple with poverty.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice Joymalya Bagchi made the observations while hearing a habeas corpus (bring the person) petition filed by a rights activist alleging disappearance of a few Rohingyas from the custody of authorities in Delhi.

Adityanath urged people to remain vigilant and ensure proper identity verification before hiring anyone.

"The security of the state is our collective responsibility because security is the foundation of prosperity," he said. *—PTI*

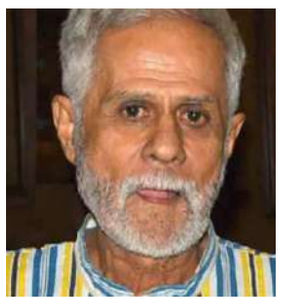


PHOTO: PTI

Veteran Bengali actor Kalyan Chatterjee no more

KOLKATA, 8 DEC

Kalyan Chatterjee, the esteemed veteran Bengali actor, has died at the age of 81 at a government hospital in Kolkata. The West Bengal Motion Picture Artists' Forum confirmed his passing, stating he succumbed to typhoid and age-related ailments at MR Bangur Super Speciality Hospital. Chatterjee debuted in the 1968 film Aponjon and played significant supporting roles in over 400 films, including noteworthy titles such as Dhanyee Meye and Satyajit Ray's Pratidwandi. The Forum expressed its shock, declaring, "One of our most valued members... has left us." Chatterjee, a Pune Film Institute alumnus, was a contemporary of Soumitra Chatterjee, Sabitri Chattopadhyay, and Dipankar De. —*PTI*

Prohibitory orders in 2 Odisha villages after clash

MALKANGIRI, 8 DEC

Prohibitory orders have been imposed in two villages of Odisha's Malkangiri district after tribals from Rakhelguda attacked neighbouring MV-26 on Sunday over the alleged killing of a 51-year-old woman whose headless body was recovered from a river. A dozen houses were damaged, several vehicles destroyed and four homes set ablaze, police said. Additional SP Raj Kishore Das said the situation was under control, while senior officials, including the DIG (South Western), the Collector and the SP, visited the area and held a peace meeting. Tribal groups have demanded the arrest of the killer and recovery of the missing head. Two people have been detained, while many residents of MV-26 have fled. —*PTI*

Odisha student dies after self-immolation

BHUBANESWAR, 8 DEC

A female undergraduate student in Odisha's Sudergarh district has died from severe burn injuries sustained after allegedly setting herself on fire in response to blackmail. The incident occurred on Friday night, and despite being transferred to Ispat General Hospital, she succumbed to her injuries. Odisha's Health Minister Mukesh Mahaling visited the hospital and attempted to arrange superior treatment. In response, BJD President Naveen Patnaik expressed condolences, lamenting the state's rising violence against women. —*PTI*

Post Malone to perform in Guwahati

GUWAHATI, 8 DEC

American singer-rapper Post Malone is set to perform in Guwahati today, as confirmed by officials. According to the state tourism department, over 20,000 tickets have been sold, with continued interest in the concert. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma remarked, "Post Malone performing in Guwahati is more than a concert. It's a milestone in Assam's rise as a true cultural hub." He emphasised that Guwahati represents a new cultural chapter for the region. Known for blending genres like pop and rap, Post Malone continues to gain international acclaim. —*PTI*

Goa fire devastates migrant workers' families

The men from Jharkhand, Assam, other states worked in the kitchen as cooks and chefs

PANAJI, 8 DEC

The devastating fire that ripped through a North Goa nightclub after midnight on Sunday has left families across Assam, Jharkhand and Delhi shattered, as they grapple with the loss of loved ones who had travelled far from home — some for work, others for a long-awaited holiday.

In Assam, the families of Manojit Mal, 24, Rahul Tanti, 60, and cook Dignata Patir said their children were compelled to migrate for work due to the absence of livelihood options in their villages. Mal and Tanti, both from the tea tribe community, worked in the club's kitchen. Villagers in Barak Valley said collapsing tea garden conditions had forced youths to seek work in distant states.

Patir's mother in Dhemaji said both her sons worked outside Assam for the same reason. Their relatives claimed authorities had not informed them of plans to bring the bodies home.

Jharkhand too is mourning three migrant workers. Brothers Pradeep, 24, and Binod Mahto, 20, from Lapung were cremated on Monday after their bodies were flown back in special ambulances. The youths had migrated to Goa a year ago and sent about Rs 30,000 home every month.

The third victim, Mohit Munda, 22, from Khunti district, has been taken to his village for last rites. Agriculture Minister Shilpy Neha Tirkey said she would seek welfare support for the families, while the Labour Department has provided Rs 50,000 as immediate relief.

In Delhi, a family holiday turned into tragedy.

Four Karawal Nagar residents, Vinod Kumar, 43; Kamla Joshi, 42; Anita Joshi, 41; and Saroj Joshi, 39— were among those killed.

Vinod's wife, Bhavna, the sole survivor from the group, is undergoing treatment. The sisters had planned the trip for months, and Vinod had accompanied them to ensure they felt safe.

Neighbours described the deaths as "impossible to grasp", alleging that the club had been ordered shut but continued operating "illegally". In Karawal Nagar, relatives are shielding the victims' children and Vinod's elderly mother, who still believes the injured will return home soon. —*PTI*

Family members of brothers Pradeep and Binod Mahto, who were victims of the Goa nightclub fire, perform their last rites in Ranchi on Monday PHOTO: PTI

- Villagers in Barak Valley said collapsing tea garden conditions had forced youths to seek work in distant states. Patir's mother in Dhemaji said both her sons worked outside Assam for the same reason.

ABSCONDING CLUB OWNER ASSURES 'SUPPORT'

Saurabh Luthra, one of the owners of Birch by Romeo Lane nightclub in Arpora in North Goa took to Instagram to express grief and asserted that the management will extend every possible form of assistance, support and cooperation to the bereaved and affected individuals. Saurabh Luthra, who has been named in the FIR related to the fire along with co-owner Gaurav Luthra, in his Instagram post, claimed the management expresses "profound grief" and is "deeply shaken" by the tragic loss of lives resulting from the unfortunate incident at Birch.

Govt has done its job: SC declines plea on IndiGo fiasco

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

The Supreme Court refused to grant permission for an urgent hearing on a plea seeking judicial intervention into the cancellation of hundreds of flights by IndiGo, stating that the Centre has taken note of the situation and is addressing it.

The court said that it is aware of the fact that lakhs of people are stranded at airports.

"Lakhs of people are stranded at airports. We know the Centre has taken timely action. We know people may have medical problems and other important issues, etc.," Chief Justice Surya Kant, who was heading a bench comprising Justice Joymalya Bagchi, said on Monday after a lawyer mentioned the issue.

Around 250 IndiGo flights from New Delhi and Bengaluru airports were cancelled on Monday, sources said.

At the New Delhi airport, 134 flights were cancelled, while at the Bengaluru airport, the carrier cancelled 117 services.

IndiGo has been facing heat from both the government and the passengers for cancelling hundreds of flights since 2 December, citing regulatory changes.

Meanwhile, on Monday, the Delhi High Court listed for hearing on 10 December a plea seeking directions to the Centre to provide support and refunds to passengers.

The petition was mentioned for urgent hearing before a bench of Chief Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyaya and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela. The counsel for the petitioner said they have filed a PIL on the IndiGo crisis issue. When the court pointed out that the government had already passed some directions, the counsel responded affirmatively. —*PTI*

Hyderabad airport gets bomb threats

HYDERABAD, 8 DEC

The Rajiv Gandhi International Airport (RGIA) here received emails about bombing threats to three flights, including two international ones. After checks, they were declared a hoax, police said on Monday.

The airport received emails on late Sunday night targeting a British Airways (BA 277) flight from Heathrow, Lufthansa's (LH 752) from Frankfurt and IndiGo's 6E 7178 from Kannur.

Airport sources said all the flights landed safely. Two international flights landed here early on Monday.

"The RGIA customer support received the emails on Sunday. Checks were carried out. Nothing suspicious was found," a police official said. —*PTI*

Dileep claims ex-wife plotted to ruin his career

>>>CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

After his acquittal on Monday, Dileep accused a section of the police and media of framing him to "destroy" his career, alleging a "real conspiracy" against him and criticising his ex-wife for remarks suggesting a criminal plot behind the assault.

Dileep was arrested in July 2017 after investigators claimed Pulsar Suni had sent him a letter from prison. He secured bail that October. A supplementary charge sheet filed in November 2017 named seven more accused, including Dileep, though five were later dscharged or turned approvers. The phone used to record the assault was never found; the prosecution relied on a memory card handed over by a lawyer. Allegations of a personal dispute between Dileep and the survivor, involving his then wife Manju Warrier, formed part of the prosecution's theory of conspiracy.

The trial itself was tumultuous. Dileep's plea for a CBI probe was rejected by the High Court in 2019, and later that year the Supreme Court ordered that the trial be completed within six months. However, repeated petitions from all sides, changes of prosecutors, the Covid-19 pandemic, and requests for further investigation caused significant delays. New allegations surfaced in 2021 after director B Balachandra Kumar claimed Dileep possessed the assault visuals, prompting another round of inquiry and even a separate case accusing him of conspiring to harm investigating officers. In 2022, police sought an inquiry into alleged illegal access to the memory card kept in court custody. Though the trial court dismissed the plea, the High Court ordered a fact-finding probe after the survivor alleged tampering. —*PTI*

Malayalam actor Dileep leaves the Ernakulam district court following his acquittal PHOTO: PTI

Delhi court extends NIA custody for Red Fort blast suspects

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

A Delhi court has extended the custody of three doctors and a preacher by four days in connection with the November 10 Red Fort blast. The accused—Dr Muzammil Ganai, Dr Adeel Rather, Dr Shaheena Saeed, and Maulvi Irfan Ahmed Wagay—were presented before Principal and Sessions Judge Anju Bajaj Chandna after their initial 10-day custody, granted on 29 November, expired.

Media coverage of the court proceedings was restricted, with tight security enforced at the Patiala House district court. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has conducted seven arrests to date, linked to a 'white-collar' terror module uncovered by Jammu and Kashmir Police.

"The agency continues to pursue various leads in connection with the suicide bombing, and has been conducting searches across states in coordination with the respective police forces to identify and track others involved in the gruesome attack," the NIA stated.

Dr Umar-un-Nabi, who allegedly drove the explosives-laden i20 car that detonated outside the Red Fort, is reported to have orchestrated the bombing, resulting in 15 fatalities and numerous injuries. —*PTI*

Tight security enforced at the Patiala House district court PHOTO: PTI

Centre opposes Sonam's plea to appear via video

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

The Central government on Monday opposed a plea in the Supreme Court from climate activist Sonam Wangchuk, seeking to appear via video conferencing from Jodhpur jail concerning his detention under the National Security Act (NSA).

The court was hearing a petition filed by Wangchuk's wife, Gitanjali J Angmo, who contends that his detention is illegal and an infringement of his fundamental rights. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, representing Angmo, requested the bench of Justices Aravind Kumar and NV Anjaria to allow Wangchuk to connect virtually from jail.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre, objected, stating, "We will have to give the same treatment to all convicts across the country." The Supreme Court adjourned the matter to 15 December. Wangchuk was detained on 26 September, following violent protests in Ladakh demanding statehood, which resulted in four deaths and 90 injuries. Angmo's amended plea argues that the detention order is based on "stale FIRs" and lacks justification. —*PTI*

I love Mohammed posters: UP cleric faces chargesheet

BAREILLY, 8 DEC

Police have filed a chargesheet against cleric Tauqeer Raza, the prime accused in the 26 September violence in Bareilly after the poster row, and 37 others in court, officials said on Monday.

The Baradari police station filed the chargesheet against Raza, the president of the Ittehad-e-Millat Council, his close aide Nafees and others, while investigations are continuing in nine other cases in which Raza has also been named.

The violence allegedly erupted on 26 September over a dispute linked to "I Love Muhammad" posters.

Police said that mobs gathered at several spots in the city, hurled petrol bombs at the police, resorted to stone-pelting and firing, and looted weapons including a riot-control gun. Around than two dozen policemen were injured in the violence.

Ten cases were registered in Kotwali, Baradari, Premnagar, Cantt and Qila police stations. Investigations into two key cases registered at Kotwali and Baradari were later transferred to the crime branch.

Senior Superintendent of Police Anurag Arya said 38 accused, including Raza, were sent to jail in the Baradari case, and the chargesheet was filed in court on Saturday. —*PTI*

5 MONTHS LATER...

US attorney for AI crash victims flags payout delays

AHMEDABAD, 8 DEC

The lead US attorney, **Mike Andrews**, representing the families of the victims of the Air India AI 171 plane crash, raised serious concerns over delayed compensation payment, the psychological trauma suffered by families, and key technical questions emerging from the investigation.

Speaking on the condition of families, the lawyer said, "Every day is a struggle for them."

Citing an example from the UK, he said a family that lost its primary breadwinner was forced to relocate due to financial problems, and three children had to drop out of school.

On technical investigation, Andrews added that the legal team said they are closely examining flight data, electrical systems, and other technical evidence with the help of aviation experts. "They pointed to reported electrical flickering moments before the crash, possible emergency power activation, and deployment of the Ram Air Turbine (RAT), suggesting a serious electrical or hydraulic failure. They also raised concerns about possible water leaks in electronic equipment bays," he said.

The lawyer expressed keen interest in reports that investigators from the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) may be going to Washington, DC, to meet officials of the US National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), stating that such a visit suggests the findings so far are significant.

Andrews said that only a few families have received the Rs 1 crore interim compensation.

On reports that families are being asked to sign documents releasing Boeing, GE and other entities from future liability, Andrews said the lawyers advised families not to sign any forms. —*ANI*

Mike Andrews PHOTO: ANI

PHOTO: PTI

ANOTHER VOLCANO ERUPTS

Hawaii's Kilauea volcano erupted again on Friday, sending lava fountains up to 1,200 ft high from three vents. The 12.1-hour eruption produced about 16.5 million cubic yards of lava. The plume rose above 20,000 ft. This is one of the world's most active volcanoes that saw frequent eruptions since December 2024

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Flight cancellations to hit IndiGo financially: Moody's

A chaotic scene at Delhi airport after Indigo cancelled hundreds of flights ***PHOTO: PTI***

The widespread disruptions in IndiGo flights, resulting from the airline's failure to plan for aviation regulations communicated to industry more than a year in advance, could result in financial damage from loss of revenue as well as potential penalties for cancellations, Moody's Ratings said on Monday.

In a note, Moody's said the disruptions are "credit negative" for the airline. "Despite temporary reprieve, failure to effectively plan for new aviation regulations is credit negative." The disruptions, which coincided with peak winter schedules, resulted in over 1,600 flight cancellations on 5 December, after similar operational issues in November left more than 1,200 flights grounded. Flights cancellations started on 2 December and the airline is yet to restore normalcy. More than 500 flights were cancelled on Monday.

"The disruptions are credit negative because IndiGo could face significant financial damage from loss of revenue because of flight cancellations, refunds and other compensation to affected customers, along with potential penalties imposed by DGCA," Moody's said. Moody's cited the airline's "significant lapses in planning, oversight and resource management" as the primary cause, noting that the regulations had been communicated to the industry more than a year in advance.

The airline, rated Baa3 with a stable outlook, last week received a temporary exemption from Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) for its Flight Duty Time Limitation (FDTL) rules, effective until 10 February, 2026.

This followed a week-long period of IndiGo reporting massive delays and cancellations of its flights caused by a mix of regulatory changes and weather conditions that exacerbated the company's lapses in planning, amid a peak winter-schedule for the airline.

The Phase 2 FDTL regulations, introduced on November 1, 2025, classify any duty between midnight and 6 am as night duty and reduce permissible landings within 24 hours from six to two or three. While intended to manage crew fatigue, the rules are among the strictest globally.

IndiGo's lean operational model, effective under normal conditions, lacked resilience to absorb the regulatory changes, triggering a system-wide schedule reset.

DGCA has issued show-cause notices to IndiGo CEO Pieter Elbers and COO Isidro Porqueras, raising questions about leadership continuity. The Ministry of Civil Aviation (MoCA) has directed the airline to process all customer refunds by 7 December, without levies, while potential penalties remain under consideration.

"Recent flight disruptions underscore significant lapses in planning, oversight and resource management by IndiGo because the new regulations had been known to the industry for more than a year. The airline's lean operations, which provide cost efficiencies in stable times, lacked the resilience needed for this change in regulations, leading to the need for a system-wide reboot that led to cancellation(s)," Moody's said.

IndiGo's on-time performance dropped to 68 pe cent in November from 84 per cent in October, with over 1,200 cancellations in November.

The situation worsened with routine fog, leading to further cancellations and leaving many passengers stranded.

The rating agency said, following a schedule reset over December 5-6, IndiGo has gradually restored services. The CEO confirmed that 1,650 of its 2,200 daily flights are operational, and expected a return to full schedules by mid-December.

"The DGCA exemption remains effective until February 10, 2026, subject to a mandatory review every 15 days based on operational and compliance reports submitted by IndiGo. These reports must detail crew utilization, steps to enhance crew availability, operability improvements and revised crew planning measures. Additionally, IndiGo must submit a 30-day road map for full compliance with FDTL regulations, including timelines for achieving 100 per cent adherence," it said.

While no penalties have been imposed yet, they remain a possibility, Moody's said.

"We have downgraded IndiGo's issuer category score for human capital to 4 from 3, reflecting the adverse impact of slower hiring on the airline's operations. Although IndiGo does not have employee unions, its pilots, through broader pilot associations in India, possess significant collective bargaining power. "IndiGo's governance issuer category score of 3 for management track record captures management's lack of judgment and preparedness for the impending regulatory changes," it said.

There is no change to IndiGo's social issuer profile score of S-4, which indicates high credit exposure to social risks, and its governance issuer profile score of G-3, representing moderate credit exposure to governance risks. Moreover, there will be some reputational damage, which may hurt the company, especially in its code-sharing arrangements. —PTI

SALAR ساہر

Pollution woes: Satellites fail to detect farm fires

More than 90 per cent of large farm fires in Punjab and Haryana are now going undetected by the official monitoring systems as farmers are shifting stubble-burning activities to late afternoons, according to a new analysis published on Monday.

The Stubble Burning Status Report 2025 by the International Forum for Environment, Sustainability and Technology (iFOREST) said this led to major underestimation of the contribution of stubble burning to Delhi's air pollution this year.

iFOREST said the government's current monitoring protocol, run by the Consortium for Research on Agroecosystem Monitoring and Modeling from Space (CREAMS) of the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, is unable to detect most farm fires as it relies mainly on polar-orbiting satellites that observe India only between 10:30 am and 1:30 pm.

This narrow time window no longer matches farmers' burning practices, it said.

At the same time, the report finds real progress on the ground, with burnt areas in Punjab and Haryana falling by 25-35 per cent over recent years.

iFOREST said burnt-area mapping provides a more accurate picture than active fire counts, which currently suggest a much larger decline.

Chandra Bhushan, CEO of iFOREST, said, "Our analysis provides incontrovertible evidence that India's current stubble-burning monitoring system is structurally misaligned with ground realities.

"Farmers have shifted burning to the late afternoon, while our monitoring relies on satellites that capture active fires only during a narrow time window (10.30 am to 1.30 pm).

"The result is a massive underestimation of fires, emissions and their contribution to air pollution in Delhi. We urgently need to overhaul the system."

The report uses India's first multi-satellite and multi-sensor assessment, combining MODIS and VIIRS data with high-resolution Sentinel-2 burnt-area mapping and 15-minute geostationary observations from the SEVIRI instrument on Meteosat-8 and 9.

SEVIRI data show the scale of undercounting.

According to the analysis, in Punjab, more than 90 per cent of large farm fires in 2024 and 2025 occurred after 3 pm. In 2021, only 3 per cent of such fires took place after this time.

In Haryana, most large fires have occurred after 3 pm since 2019.

iFOREST warned that missing fires during the late afternoon and evening lead to major errors in estimating emissions and in air-quality forecasting for Delhi-NCR.

Despite the monitoring gaps, burnt-area mapping shows genuine reductions in stubble burning.

Sentinel-2 data indicate that burnt areas in Punjab during the Kharif season dropped from a peak of 31,447 sq km in 2022 to about 20,000 sq km in 2025, marking a 37 per cent decline.

In Haryana, burnt areas have reduced from 11,633 sq km in 2019 to 8,812 sq km in 2025, a 25 per cent fall, though without a consistent downward trend.

"Burnt areas provide a more reliable picture of stubble burning. Our analysis shows that Punjab and Haryana have reduced burnt areas by 25-35 per cent, which is good news and indicates that in-situ and ex-situ stubble-management practices are being adopted. But this is not the time to become complacent.

"Even in 2025, close to 30,000 sq km of paddy fields were burnt in Punjab and Haryana, making them a major source of air-quality degradation in Delhi-NCR and the wider Indo-Gangetic region," Bhushan said.

iFOREST said the government must urgently reform the national monitoring system and recommended that CREAMS start publishing burnt-area data, not just active fire counts, and that air-quality forecasting models used by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology revise their methodology to estimate the contribution of stubble burning more accurately.

Ishaan Kochhar, Programme Lead at iFOREST, said, "We cannot manage what we do not measure accurately. Policy decisions are currently being shaped by incomplete information. To solve the stubble-burning problem in the Indo-Gangetic plain, the government must urgently reform the monitoring protocol to integrate burnt-area mapping and geostationary data. "We also need to expand our focus beyond Punjab and Haryana to the emerging hotspots in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh."

The report also said that stubble burning is rising in some other states, and active fire-count data already indicate increases in places like Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. —*PTI*

A farmer burns stubble after a harvest at a paddy field, on the outskirts of Amritsar ***PHOTO: PTI***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

UP madrasa students seek other academic avenues after SC order

- Many students pursuing higher religious studies in madrasas are uncertain about their academic careers. Ghulam Masih, a Kamil first-year student from Madarsa Darul Uloom Faiz-ur-Rasool in Siddharthnagar, said he too is planning to enrol into BA and MA courses from a university.

Supreme Court struck down the state madrasa board's authority to award degrees, calling it a contravention of the UGC Act ***PHOTO: PTI***

Several students enrolled in Kamil and Fazil courses at madrasas in Uttar Pradesh are now exploring new academic options after the Supreme Court struck down the state madrasa board's authority to award these degrees, calling it a contravention of the UGC Act.

Around 32,000 students were enrolled in these courses across the state when the Supreme Court, on November 5 last year, deemed the Uttar Pradesh madrasa education board's practice of awarding Kamil (graduate-level) and Fazil (postgraduate-level) degrees "unconstitutional", ruling that such authority lies only with universities regulated under the University Grants Commission (UGC) Act.

For Saqlain Raza, a Fazil first-year student at Madarsa Jamia Farooquia in Varanasi, the ruling has forced a major shift.

Raza, who has already cleared his first-year Fazil exam, is now preparing to join Kashi Vidyapeeth for a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree.

"I have to think about my career. Given the situation, I will pursue BA, and later, MA," he told PTI.

He said although his Aalim (higher secondary) qualification makes him eligible for BA admission, the years he spent pursuing Kamil and Fazil would effectively go to waste.

Raza is not alone. Many students pursuing higher religious studies in madrasas are uncertain about their academic careers.

Ghulam Masih, a Kamil first-year student from Madarsa Darul Uloom Faiz-ur-Rasool in Siddharthnagar, said he too is planning to enrol into BA and MA courses from a university.

However, he hopes a solution may emerge, noting that a case is pending in court seeking affiliation of madrasa students with Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti Language University.

Others, however, feel trapped. Mohammad Saad Nizami, who appeared for the Fazil first-year exam from Madarsa Taleemuddin in Mau district, said his studies have come to a halt.

"I took my exam in February 2024 and have already lost nearly one-and-a-half years. I request the government to resolve the situation created after the court order," he said.

Unsure about the future, Nizami said he has considered abandoning his studies and seeking work if academic avenues do not emerge.

Uttar Pradesh Minister of State for Minority Welfare Danish Azad Ansari said the government is working on a solution.

"We will take a decision after examining all legal aspects," he said, assuring that teachers currently employed in aided madrasas on the basis of Kamil and Fazil degrees would not be affected.

The Teachers' Association Madaris-e-Arabia Uttar Pradesh has filed a petition in the Supreme Court seeking that madrasa students be affiliated with Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti Language University so their exams and degrees can be regularised.

The court, during a hearing on May 30, sought responses from the state government, UGC, and the Uttar Pradesh Board of Madarsa Education.

However, Kunwar Basit Ali, president of the BJP minority morcha in Uttar Pradesh, opposed the idea of mid-session affiliation.

He said madrasa curricula for Kamil and Fazil were not at par with university standards.

"If affiliation is required, students should be admitted afresh into the university's degree programmes," he said, adding that he would soon take up the issue with the state minority welfare minister.

Madrasa teachers' association general secretary Diwan Sahab Zaman Khan said most madrasa students belong to economically weaker backgrounds and cannot afford high university fees if asked to enrol privately.

A senior official at the language university, speaking on condition of anonymity, said they could not comment as the issue is before the Supreme Court. —*PTI*

PHOTO: IBO

6 terrorists killed in Pakistan

PESHAWAR/LAHORE, 8 DEC

In a significant security operation in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, six terrorists were killed, and a security personnel lost his life on Monday during a raid in the Soran Darra area near the Afghanistan border. Officials reported several injuries among both terrorists and security forces, who continue to search the area. Simultaneously, Pakistani law enforcement arrested 12 militants in Punjab, recovering explosives and weapons. The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) stated, "The suspects were planning to carry out terror attacks on sensitive sites." They had been documenting locations of potential targets. The CTD also hinted at links to India but provided no evidence. Terror incidents have surged by 25 per cent in 2025, exacerbating national security concerns. *—PTI*

US deports 55 more Iranians

TEHRAN, 8 DEC

A second flight carrying 55 Iranians deported from the United States has departed, as reported by Iranian officials. The expulsions come amid heightened tensions following the US bombardment of Iranian nuclear sites during Tehran's June war with Israel. Mojtaba Shasti Karimi from Iran's Foreign Ministry acknowledged the deportations, stating, "These individuals announced their willingness for return following continuation of anti-immigration and discriminative policy against foreign nationals particularly Iranians by the United States." Despite US claims that deportees violated immigration laws, the full scale of the returns remains unclear, with concerns raised regarding their safety amid Tehran's crackdowns on dissenters. *—PTI*

Prince Harry's security in the UK under review

LONDON, 8 DEC

Prince Harry's security provisions for UK visits are undergoing a fresh, comprehensive threat assessment by the Home Office, the first since 2020. The review, conducted by Protection of Royalty and Public Figures Risk Management Board, follows a formal request Harry submitted to Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood in October after losing his latest legal challenge. Harry has fought the downgrade of his taxpayer-funded protection since 2020, when he and Meghan Markle stepped back as senior royals and moved to North America. His 2021 judicial review was dismissed in 2024, and his final appeal rejected in May 2025. The new assessment, with a decision expected next month. *— Salar News*

UN launches $33B aid appeal for 2026

GENEVA, 8 DEC

The UN's humanitarian aid coordination office announced a significant reduction in its 2026 funding appeal to $33 billion, citing the lowest annual support in a decade. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported receiving only $15 billion this year, affecting millions reliant on assistance amid ongoing crises. OCHA chief Tom Fletcher lamented, "In 2025, hunger surged... health systems broke apart," calling for a "radical transformation" in aid delivery. The UN aims to support 135 million people next year across various crises, including those affected by conflict in Palestine and Sudan, while highlighting the vast disparity in global defence spending. *—PTI*

Thailand launches strikes near Cambodia border

1 Thai soldier & 4 Cambodian civilians killed; 50,000 flee

BANGKOK, 8 DEC

Thailand launched airstrikes along its disputed border with Cambodia on Monday, with both sides accusing the other of violating a ceasefire that halted deadly clashes earlier this year. The renewed fighting follows five days of combat in July that killed dozens of soldiers and civilians, prompting US President Donald Trump to broker a truce in October. Tensions, however, have continued to simmer.

The Thai army said more than 50,000 people have evacuated border areas, while Cambodia reported moving residents from several nearby villages. At least one Thai soldier and four Cambodian civilians have been killed in the latest clashes.

Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul, in a televised address, said operations would continue "as necessary" to defend national sovereignty. "Thailand has never initiated a fight or an invasion, but will never tolerate a violation of its sovereignty," he said.

Thai Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul said operations would continue 'as necessary' to defend national sovereignty PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

The ceasefire came under strain in early November when Thai troops were injured by landmines, prompting Bangkok to suspend implementation of the agreement. Trump said he intervened again in mid-November as tensions rose.

Fresh exchanges erupted on Sunday, with each side claiming the other fired first. Thailand said Cambodian fire injured two soldiers, provoking a 20-minute exchange. Cambodia insisted its troops did not retaliate.

On Monday, Thai army spokesperson Maj Gen Winthai Suvaree accused Cambodian troops of firing into Thai territory, killing one soldier and wounding eight. Thailand responded with airstrikes against what it called Cambodian "supporting fire positions". Artillery rounds landed near Thai residential areas but no civilian casualties were reported.

Cambodia rejected the accusations, saying Thailand initiated the attacks. Its Information Minister Neth Pheaktra said Thai fire killed four civilians and injured nine. Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim urged restraint, warning the region "cannot afford" renewed conflict.

The dispute dates back to colonial-era maps and long-standing tension over the Preah Vihear temple area, awarded to Cambodia by the International Court of Justice in 1962. The current ceasefire offers no mechanism to resolve the underlying territorial differences. *—PTI*

- The renewed fighting follows five days of combat in July that killed dozens of soldiers and civilians, prompting US President Donald Trump to broker a truce in October

Zelenskyy in London for peace plan talks

WASHINGTON, DC, 8 DEC

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is in London on Monday to meet UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron, and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz to finalise Ukraine peace deal.

On Sunday, US President Donald Trump said, "I have to say that I'm a little bit disappointed that President Zelensky hasn't yet read the peace proposal," signalling frustration with Kyiv's response to recent diplomatic outreach.

'TRUMP MAY WALK AWAY FROM PEACE DEAL'

Trump's eldest son suggested that the President could walk away from Ukraine peace talks amid allegations of corruption involving senior Ukrainian officials. Speaking at the Doha Forum, Donald Trump Jr claimed Ukraine was "a far more corrupt country than Russia" and called Zelenskyy "one of the great marketers of all time".

These comments followed three days of meetings in Miami between delegations from Kyiv and Washington. Both sides described the talks as productive, but Ukrainian officials said unresolved questions remain over security guarantees and territorial matters.

Ukraine has long faced corruption concerns, and recent developments have intensified scrutiny. Andriy Yermak, a top aide and influential figure in peace negotiations, resigned after raids.

Zelenskyy spoke by phone on Saturday with Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner. "The American representatives know the basic Ukrainian positions," Zelensky said. "The conversation was constructive, although not easy."

At the same time, the Kremlin welcomed Trump's new national security strategy, saying that it "corresponds in many ways to our vision." The strategy warned that Europe faces "civilisational erasure". *—PTI*

The mutineers led by Lt Colonel Pascal Tigri PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

No info on Benin coup leader, fate of hostages

LAGOS, 8 DEC

The leader of a failed coup in Benin is on the run, and the fate of hostages remained unclear a day after a group of soldiers attempted to overthrow the government of the West African nation.

The soldiers, calling themselves the Committee for Refoundation, stormed the national television station early on Sunday. Led by Benin army officer Lt. Col. Pascal Tigri, eight soldiers appeared in a broadcast announcing the removal of President Patrice Talon, dissolution of the government and suspension of all state institutions.

By Sunday afternoon, the coup was foiled by Benin's military, supported by Nigerian forces. At least a dozen soldiers were arrested on Monday. Tigri's whereabouts were not known.

Talon described the coup as a "senseless adventure" and said the situation was under control. He vowed to punish mutineers and ensure the safety of hostages, including some believed to be senior military officers.

Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu praised Nigeria's armed forces for standing "as a defender and protector of the constitutional order in Benin." *—PTI*

Stand up to ICE: Mamdani tells NYC

NEW YORK, 8 DEC

New York City Mayor-elect Zohran Mamdani posted a video on Sunday explaining immigrants' right to refuse to speak to or comply with agents from US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, days after federal agents carried out a raid in Manhattan.

In the video, Mamdani vowed to protect the city's 3 million immigrants, saying, "We can all stand up to ICE if you know your rights."

He explained that people in the US can chose not to speak to federal immigration agents, film them without interfering and refuse their requests to enter private spaces. ICE agents cannot enter spaces like a home, school or private area of a workplace without a judicial warrant signed by a judge, Mamdani said.

"ICE is legally allowed to lie to you, but you have the right to remain silent. If you're being detained, you may always ask, Am I free to go?' repeatedly until they answer you," said Mamdani, who will be sworn in as mayor on 1 January.

Meanwhile, Israeli President Isaac Herzog sharply criticised Mamdani during a speech at Yeshiva University in New York City. He said Mamdani questioned Jews' right to move to Israel and participate in traditional Zionist practices. "The incoming mayor's response was to suggest that Jews who consider fulfilling (Aliyah or immigration) are violating international law. In the face of such hatred, we must fight back," he said. *—PTI*

- In the video, Mamdani vowed to protect the city's 3 million immigrants, saying, "We can all stand up to ICE if you know your rights."

'Netflix buying Warner Bros could be a problem'

US President Donald Trump said a deal struck by Netflix to buy Warner Bros. Discovery "could be a problem". "They have a very big market share, and when they have Warner Bros., you know, that share goes up a lot, so, I don't know," he said. "I'll be involved in that decision, too."

The federal government is yet to approve the USD 72 billion deal. If approved by regulators, the merger would put two of the world's biggest streaming services under same ownership and join Warner's TV and motion picture division, including DC Studios, with Netflix's vast library.

Send Usha back: Vance's migration bid under fire

US Vice President JD Vance has drawn fierce criticism after claiming mass migration amounts to "theft of the American Dream," with opponents calling the comment xenophobic and pointing out that his wife, Usha, is the daughter of Indian immigrants. Critics urged him to "send her back". The row follows another controversy after Vance told a New York Post podcast that it was "reasonable" for Americans to prefer neighbours who share their race, language or skin colour, prompting condemnation from civil-rights groups.

Japan summons China envoy; China drops Japan's films

BEIJING/ TOKYO, 8 DEC

Japan has summoned China's ambassador after Chinese military aircraft allegedly locked fire-control radar twice onto Japanese fighter jets, further straining already fraught relations between the two countries. Tokyo lodged a strong protest on Sunday, calling the actions of the Chinese J-15 jets over international waters southeast of Okinawa "dangerous" and "extremely regrettable".

The diplomatic row has also spilled into the cultural domain in Hong Kong, where three Japanese films — Naoko Ogigami's 'Kamome Diner', Juzo Itami's 'Tampopo' and Naomi Kawase's 'An' — were abruptly dropped from the government-run programme 'Food for Thought – A Cinematic Feast'. Officials cited "programme adjustments", though other foreign titles, including 'Babette's Feast' and 'Julie & Julia', remain on schedule.

The cancellations follow a wider pullback of Japanese films in China after Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's recent remarks on Taiwan. In November, she suggested military action could be considered if Beijing attempted to forcibly assert control over the island — a statement China condemned as inflammatory. Beijing urged Japan to retract the comments and accused Tokyo of "playing with fire".

Amid rising tensions, Japan is accelerating construction of a self-defence base on Mageshima Island, a move closely watched in Beijing. China has increased naval patrols around the disputed Senkaku Islands, while Japan plans to deploy missiles to Yonaguni Island, near Taiwan.

China has warned that any Japanese military involvement in the Taiwan Strait would be viewed as an "act of aggression". The escalation — from military confrontations to cultural fallout — has fuelled concerns over a broader regional conflict in the Asia-Pacific. *—PTI*

Australia battles wildfires again

MELBOURNE, 8 DEC

A firefighter has tragically died while combating wildfires that have obliterated approximately 40 homes across two Australian states. The 59-year-old man was struck by a falling tree on Sunday evening while tackling a blaze near Bulahdelah, New South Wales, which has scorched 3,500 hectares of woodland and destroyed four homes over the weekend, reported Rural Fire Service Commissioner Trent Curtin.

Sadly, the man could not be resuscitated. Firefighters anticipate battling the blaze for several days, Curtin added. As of Monday, there were 52 wildfires raging across New South Wales, with nine remaining out of control. In total, 20 homes have been destroyed in the state over the weekend.

Meanwhile, in Tasmania, 19 homes were lost due to a wildfire in the coastal community of Dolphin Sands. Local government official Dick Shaw reported that while the fire was contained by Monday, access to the community remained closed. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Israeli cops barge into UN camp in Jerusalem

TEL AVIV, 8 DEC

Israeli police forcibly entered the East Jerusalem compound of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees early Monday, intensifying a wider campaign against the organisation, which Israel has banned from operating on its territory.

UNRWA said "sizeable numbers" of Israeli forces — including police on motorcycles, trucks and forklifts — stormed its Sheikh Jarrah compound and cut communications. The agency condemned the "unauthorised and forceful entry" as a violation of its UN privileges. Photos showed police inside the premises and an Israeli flag on the roof. Police claimed the action was part of a municipal "debt-collection procedure."

The raid comes amid Israel's year-long pressure on UNRWA, which provides services to 2.5 million Palestinian refugees in Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and neighbouring countries. Israel accuses the agency of Hamas infiltration, allegations the UN rejects. Israel formally banned UNRWA in January, and the US halted funding in 2024. With UNRWA struggling to operate in Gaza, agencies such as WFP and UNICEF have stepped in. The agency was excluded from US-led ceasefire talks. UNRWA closed the Jerusalem compound in May. *—Agencies*

AFTER HEIST SHOCKER

Now, water leak at Louvre damages hundred of books

PARIS, 8 DEC

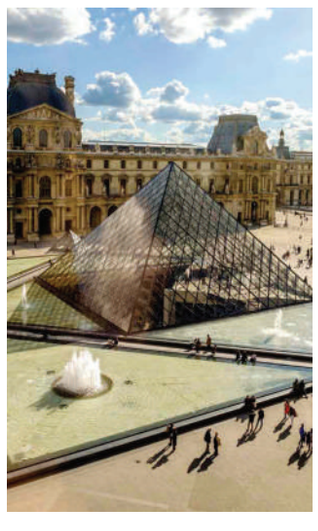
A water leak last month damaged hundreds of books in the Egyptian antiquities department at the Louvre, underscoring the deteriorating state of the world's most visited museum just weeks after a daring jewel heist exposed security flaws.

Specialist website La Tribune de l'Art reported that around 400 rare books were affected, blaming poor pipe conditions. It said the department had long sought funds to protect the collection from such risks without success.

Le Louvre's deputy administrator, Francis Steinbock, told BFM TV on 7 December that the water pipe leak affected one of the three rooms of the library of the Egyptian antiquities department.

"We have identified between 300 and 400 works; the count is going on," he said, adding that the books lost were "those consulted by Egyptologists but were not precious books."

He acknowledged the problem had been known for years and said repairs were scheduled for September 2026.



- Specialist website La Tribune de l'Art reported that around 400 rare books were affected, blaming poor pipe conditions. It said the department had long sought funds to protect the collection

Four burglars made off in broad daylight with jewels worth USD 102 million on 19 October, exposing security gaps at the Le Louvre.

In November, structural weaknesses led to the partial closure of one of the galleries hosting Greek vases and offices. A report in October by France's public audit body, Cour des Comptes, said the museum's inability to update its infrastructure was exacerbated by excessive spending on artwork. *—Agencies*

PHOTO: PTI

Rupee falls 10P to close at 90.05 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 8 DEC

The rupee depreciated 10 paise to close at 90.05 against the US dollar on Monday, as elevated crude oil prices and persistent foreign fund outflows dented investor sentiments. Forex traders said multiple pressures, such as sustained importer demand for the American currency, foreign fund outflows from equities, and lingering uncertainty over the India-US trade deal, are keeping investor sentiment fragile. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 90.07, then gave up ground and fell to an intraday low of 90.26 against the US dollar. At the end of the trade on Monday, the rupee settled at 90.05 against the greenback, down 10 paise over its previous close. The dollar index was trading 0.01 per cent lower at 98.98. *—PTI*

SEBI PaRRVA to boost market transparency

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

SEBI has launched the Past Risk and Return Verification Agency (PaRRVA), giving investors in India access to independently verified past returns of market intermediaries. The initiative is designed to improve transparency in financial markets. Launched in partnership with the National Stock Exchange of India and CAREEdge Ratings, PaRRVA introduces a standardised framework to validate historical performance claims made by investment intermediaries. Over 62 per cent of new investors rely on influencers, and 23 per cent chase quick returns without fully understanding the risks. Dependence on unverified information remains high, making transparent, verified performance data essential. *—ANI*

Reliance Infra to set solar mfg ecosystem

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

Reliance Infrastructure has announced plans for India's most advanced fully integrated solar manufacturing ecosystem, spanning ingots, wafers, cells and modules. Announced at the investors presentation on Monday, the facility aims to ease the shortfall as India's annual solar module demand is set to reach 55–60 Gigawatt by 2030, outpacing upstream capacity India's installed stationary storage base is less than 1 Gigawatt-hour (GWh) today and will rise to 250 GWh by 2032. The vertically integrated platform is intended to reduce import dependence and boost India's clean energy security. Two Reliance firms said that Reliance NU Energies is driving the shift from plain-vanilla solar to hybrid and firm, round-the-clock renewable energy. *—PTI*

Adani Green adopts TNFD framework

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

Adani Green Energy Ltd (AGEL) announced on Monday that it has integrated the Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD) framework into its core sustainability strategy, marking a significant shift towards nature-positive renewable energy development. The TNFD is a global initiative established by the United Nations Environment Programme Finance Initiative, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Wildlife Fund, and Global Canopy, designed to help organisations identify and disclose nature-related risks and opportunities. By aligning with the TNFD, AGEL aims to enhance its leadership in the renewable sector by incorporating biodiversity considerations into its strategic decision-making. Starting in FY24, AGEL will conduct assessments across its operations. *—PTI*

Investors lose Rs 7.12L cr as Sensex, Nifty tumble

3,348 stocks decline, while 950 advanced; 187 remain unchanged

MUMBAI, 8 DEC

Market investors became poorer by Rs 7.12 lakh crore as Sensex nosedived on Monday after two consecutive days of gains, as investors rushed to take profits amid unabated selling of stocks by foreign investors.

The 30-share BSE Sensex plunged 609.68 points, or 0.71 per cent, to close at 85,102.69.

The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms eroded by Rs 7,12,514.68 crore to Rs 4,64,19,108.91 (USD 5.15 trillion).

"Indian benchmark indices concluded the day with significant losses, as the Sensex tumbled over 610 points to close at 85,103 and the Nifty50 shed 226 points to settle at 25,961," Siddhartha Khemka, Head of Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

He added that the market-wide sell-off was driven by cautious sentiment ahead of the US Federal Reserve's rate decision, continuous FII selling, and widespread profit booking across the broader market.

Sensex fell by 609.68 points, while Nifty50 shed 226 points PHOTO: PTI

From the Sensex firms, Bharat Electronics Ltd, Eternal, Trent, Tata Steel, Bajaj Finance, Adani Ports, Bajaj Finserv, State Bank of India, PowerGrid, Asian Paints, Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles, Titan, NTPC, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Larsen & Toubro, and Bharti Airtel were among the laggards.

However, Tech Mahindra, HCL Technologies, Reliance Industries, and HDFC Bank were the only gainers.

"The sustained weakness in the rupee and continued FII outflows further aggravated concerns around inflation and import-cost pressures, adding to the bearish tone," Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

The BSE midcap gauge declined 1.73 per cent, while smallcap index dropped 2.20 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, services fell by 3.70 per cent, realty by 3.50 per cent, capital goods by 2.83 per cent, telecommunication by 2.53 per cent, industrials by 2.21 per cent, utilities by 2.10 per cent, metal by 1.96 per cent, and power by 1.84 per cent.

As many as 3,348 stocks declined, while 950 advanced and 187 remain unchanged on the BSE. *—PTI*

ICICI Prudential AMC is scheduled to debut on the stock market on 19 December PHOTO: ICICBANK

ICICI Prudential AMC ₹1.07L cr IPO to open

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

ICICI Prudential Asset Management Company (AMC), a subsidiary of ICICI Bank, has revealed a price band of Rs 2,061 to Rs 2,165 per share for its upcoming initial public offering (IPO), which is valued at Rs 1.07 lakh crore (approximately USD 11.86 billion). The IPO, amounting to Rs 10,602 crore, is set to open on 12 December and will conclude on 16 December, with the bidding for anchor investors taking place on 11 December.

The offering consists entirely of an Offer-for-Sale (OFS) involving over 4.89 crore equity shares by the promoter, UK-based Prudential Corporation Holdings, with no fresh issue component. ICICI Prudential AMC will not receive any capital from this offer, as proceeds will go directly to the selling shareholder.

Currently, ICICI Bank holds a 51 per cent stake in the asset management firm, while the remaining 49 per cent is owned by its joint venture partner, Prudential Corporation Holdings.

On 28 June, ICICI Bank's board approved a further 2 per cent increase in its stake in ICICI Prudential AMC to maintain its majority shareholding. ICICI Prudential AMC is scheduled to debut on the stock market on 19 December. *—PTI*

IndiGo shares drop 9% amid ongoing flight crisis

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

Shares of InterGlobe Aviation, the parent company of IndiGo, fell nearly 9 per cent on Monday, erasing Rs 17,884.76 crore from its market value as the airline's operational crisis stretched into its seventh day.

The stock sank by 8.62 per cent to close at Rs 4,907.50 on the National Stock Exchange (NSE), while on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), it dropped 8.28 per cent to finish at Rs 4,926.55.

During the trading session, the shares hit an intraday low of Rs 4,842.20 on the BSE and Rs 4,842.50 on the NSE, nearly a 10 per cent decline.

This sharp sell-off pushed the airline's market capitalisation below the Rs 2 lakh crore threshold. On the NSE, InterGlobe's market cap declined by Rs 17,884.76 crore to Rs 1,89,719.34 crore, while on the BSE, it dipped by Rs 17,179.24 crore to Rs 1,90,455.79 crore.

IndiGo's shares have experienced a downward trend since 28 November, when they closed at approximately Rs 5,901.

Over the past seven sessions, shares have plummeted nearly 17 per cent.

Luggage of passengers piled up at the Indira Gandhi International Airport amid IndiGo flight disruptions, in New Delhi, on Monday PHOTO: PTI

The broader market also suffered, with the 30-share BSE Sensex dropping by 609.68 points, or 0.71 per cent, to close at 85,102.69, while the NSE Nifty fell by 225.90 points, or 0.86 per cent, ending at 25,960.55.

On Monday, IndiGo cancelled 562 flights from six major airports, including 150 from Bengaluru alone, facing backlash from both passengers and the government. Aviation Minister K Rammohan Naidu stated in the Rajya Sabha that an inquiry into the mass cancellations has begun, indicating potential strict actions against the carrier to set a precedent for other airlines.

In an ongoing investigation, a panel appointed by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation is expected to summon IndiGo's CEO Pieter Elbers and COO Isidre Porqueras on Wednesday.

The disruptions were attributed to inadequate preparations in managing crew and duty rosters. *—PTI*

AMID SUBDUED DEMAND

Gold falls by ₹300 to Rs 1.32 lakh/10g

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

Gold prices fell by Rs 300 to Rs 1,32,600 per 10g in the national capital on Monday due to subdued demand in the local markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity had closed at Rs 1,32,900 per 10g on Friday.

However, silver prices jumped by Rs 1,500 to Rs 1,85,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes), marking their second consecutive day of gains. It had settled at Rs 1,83,500 per kg in the previous market session. Globally, spot gold rose by 0.18 per cent to USD 4,205.26 per ounce.

He added that with central banks maintaining a steady pace of gold accumulation and investors seeking inflation resilience, the metal remains a key diversifier in both institutional and retail portfolios.

"We're seeing consistent traction across digital gold investments, reflecting growing recognition of gold's role as a strategic long-term asset," Jolly said.

Meanwhile, spot silver was trading marginally higher at USD 58.41 per ounce. On Friday, the white metal had soared by USD 2.2 or 3.84 per cent to touch an all-time high of USD 59.33 per ounce before settling at USD 58.39 per ounce.

Jolly of PL Wealth Management said bullion prices traded in a steady range, supported by softer dollar movements and sustained exchange traded fund (ETF) inflows. *—PTI*

Inox Clean Energy withdraws draft IPO, plans new filing

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

Inox Clean Energy has temporarily withdrawn its draft IPO papers after successfully raising approximately Rs 5,000 crore in a pre-IPO funding round, according to industry sources. The company is expected to refile its IPO documents with updated financials reflecting this recent funding.

Initially, Inox Clean Energy, part of the INOXGFL Group, confidentially submitted its draft red herring prospectus in July 2025, aiming to raise Rs 6,000 crore. However, significant developments—including completed acquisitions and ongoing major transactions—have prompted the company to retract its current draft. These developments are anticipated to "substantially increase the operational and pipeline IPP portfolio, as well as advancements in the solar manufacturing sector," sources noted.

In addition to securing substantial commitments from private equity investors, including a key global investor, the firm is also planning another substantial fundraising via private placement from various investors, continuing its focus on solar cell and module manufacturing and hybrid power production. *—PTI*

India, Israel sign deal to boost agri tech

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

India and Israel have taken a major step forward in agricultural cooperation with the launch of a new joint venture that will manufacture and commercialise Indian pheromone-based crop protection technologies across global markets, as per the Israeli Embassy's press statement.

The announcement was made at the valedictory session of the First International Science & Technology Clusters Conference held in New Delhi, where ATGC Biotech Pvt Ltd (India) and Luxembourg Industries Ltd (Israel) formally exchanged licensing agreements to set up Semiophore Ltd, a 50-50 Indo-Israeli partnership.

The venture marks a first for both countries, it is the first time Indian semiochemical technology is being out-licensed and produced in Israel.

The venture is the first time Indian semiochemical technology is being out-licensed and produced in Israel PHOTO: ANI

Senior officials from India and Israel attended the ceremony, including Principal Scientific Adviser Ajay Kumar Sood, Israel's Deputy Chief of Mission Fares Saeb and Vishal Choudhary, Office of the PSA to the Government of India, with other delegates.

Saeb said the agreement deepens the long-running partnership between the two nations in food security and agricultural technology.

- The announcement was made at the valedictory session of the First International Science & Technology Clusters Conference held in New Delhi, where ATGC Biotech Pvt Ltd & Luxembourg Industries Ltd formally exchanged licensing agreements to set up Semiophore Ltd

Israel's Agriculture Attache Uri Rubinstein noted that ATGC Biotech has taken part in several Indo-Israel agricultural training programmes & Centres of Excellence. *—ANI*

Intel, Tata partner to mfg semiconductors in India

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

US-based chip maker Intel has signed an agreement with Tata Group to manufacture and assemble semiconductors in India for the local market, the Indian conglomerate said on Monday.

Under the agreement, Intel and Tata intend to explore the opportunity to rapidly scale tailored AI PC solutions for consumer and enterprise markets in India, which is projected to be one of the top five markets globally by 2030.

"Intel and Tata intend to explore manufacturing and packaging of Intel products for local markets at Tata Electronics' upcoming Fab & Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test facilities, as well as a collaboration for advanced packaging in India," the Tata Group said. Tata Group is setting up a chip manufacturing plant in Dholera, Gujarat, and a semiconductor assembly and packaging plant in Assam, entailing a total investment of Rs 1.18 lakh crore.

"We see this as a tremendous opportunity to collaborate with Tata to rapidly scale in one of the world's fastest-growing compute markets, fuelled by rising PC demand and rapid AI adoption across India," Intel CEO Lip-Bu Tan said. The collaboration would leverage Intel's AI compute reference designs, Tata Electronics' industry-leading Electronics Manufacturing Services capabilities, & broad access to Indian market via Tata Group firms. *—PTI*

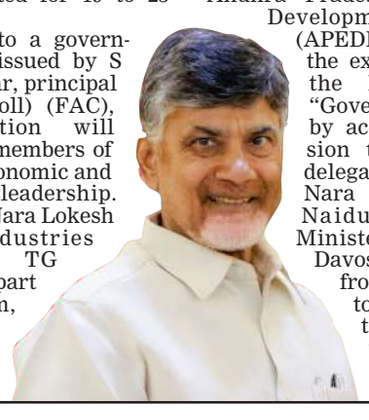
Naidu to lead delegation at World Economic Forum

AMARAVATI, DEC 8

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister **N Chandrababu Naidu** is scheduled to lead an eight-member delegation to the World Economic Forum (WEF) 2026 Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland. A governemnt order (GO) confirmed the visit slated for 19 to 23 January.

According to a government order issued by S Suresh Kumar, principal secretary (Poll) (FAC), the delegation will include key members of the state's economic and technology leadership. IT Minister Nara Lokesh and Industries Minister TG Bharath are part of the team, along with senior officials such as Kartikeya Misra (secretary to the Chief Minister), N Yuvaraj (industries secretary), Bhaskar Katamneni (IT secretary), and Shubham Bansal (director of industries). A paramedic and a security officer will also accompany the group.

The GO clarified that the Andhra Pradesh Economic Development Board (APEDB) will cover the expenditure for the Davos visit. "Government hereby accords permission to the above delegation led by Nara Chandrababu Naidu, Chief Minister, to visit Davos, Switzerland, from January 19 to 23 (excluding travel time)," the order stated. *—PTI*



BOOST FOR BENGALURU

Tata, Lockheed begin new defence MRO facility

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

Defence major Tata Advanced Systems on Monday kick-started the setting up of a defence maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) facility in India to support Lockheed Martin's C-130J Super Hercules heavy-lift military transport aircraft.

The groundbreaking of the facility in Bengaluru came as Tata Advanced Systems and Lockheed Martin are partnering to pitch the C-130J Super Hercules as the best aircraft in the race to win a mega deal to supply around 80 heavy-lift transport aircraft to the Indian Air Force (IAF).

The IAF currently operates 12 C-130Js. It is a leading tactical airlift, serving 28 operators in 23 nations. To date, more than 560 C-130Js have been delivered and certified by over 20 airworthiness authorities, with the Super Hercules global fleet surpassing three million flight hours.

Tata Advanced CEO & MD Sukaran Singh with Lockheed Martin COO Frank St John at ground-breaking event of MRO facility in Bengaluru PHOTO: ANI

The groundbreaking ceremony brought together senior officials from the IAF, government dignitaries, industry leaders and senior executives from Lockheed Martin and Tata Advanced Systems.

The construction of the MRO is expected to be completed by the end of 2026, and it is set to receive the first C-130 for MRO operations in early 2027, officials said.

"Today's groundbreaking reflects how far our collaboration with Tata Advanced Systems and India has come, and where we're headed together," said Lockheed Martin's Chief Operating Officer Frank St. John.

John said the facility will bring world-class sustainment capability into India, improve readiness for the Indian Air Force and create opportunities that will support regional and global C-130 operators.

The state-of-the-art C-130 MRO facility will provide heavy maintenance, component repair, overhaul and structural checks and testing of the C-130 J fleet. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

B'desh secures Challenger Trophy with 5-4 win

MADURAI, 8 DEC

Amirul Islam continued his splendid form as his fifth hat-trick in just six matches guided Bangladesh to a thrilling 5-4 win over Austria in the 17th/18th place playoff on Monday, clinching the inaugural Challenger Trophy at the FIH Hockey Men's Junior World Cup 2025. Amirul, the tournament's highest scorer till now with 18 goals, once again shone bright for his side in the classification match. Amirul, who has been a sensation in this tournament with brute force from penalty corners, scored in the 15th, 50th, and 57th minutes. Hozifa Hossain (27th) and Rakibul Hasan (35th) were the other goal scorers for Bangladesh. Andor Losonci (44th), Julian Kaiser (57th)—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

'I chucked intentionally': Shakib Al Hasan

LONDON, 8 DEC

Out-of-favour Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan admitted that physical fatigue forced him to intentionally resort to chucking during an English County game for Surrey, which subsequently led to his suspension from bowling. Left-arm spinner Shakib was suspended from bowling in all competitions organised by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) after his action was deemed illegal at an independent test at Loughborough University in December last year. The umpires called his action during a first-class game for Surrey against Somerset in Taunton, in which he had bowled close to 65 overs across two innings. "I think I was doing it a little bit intentionally because I bowled more than 70 overs (in one match)," Shakib told the Beard Before Wicket podcast.—*PTI*

Lawyers & judges to take part T10 tennis ball cricket meet

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

As many as 900 lawyers and judges will be displaying their cricketing prowess during the upcoming Smt Mohinder Kohli Memorial T10 tennis ball tournament scheduled to be held at the Lodhi Estate Cricket ground here from 12 December. The tournament is being organised in memory of the Late Smt. Mohindar Kohli, mother of Hon'ble Ms. Justice Hima Kohli (Former Judge, Supreme Court of India) and Ms. Neelu Kohli. The tournament will showcase the sporting prowess of lawyers and judges, comprising players of all genders, reflecting the diverse and inclusive nature of the legal community.—*PTI*

Don't see major changes in T20 squad: Salman Ali

KARACHI, 8 DEC

Pakistan's T20 skipper Salman Ali Agha has ruled out any major changes in his squad for the Men's T20 World Cup next year, saying the side has shown a marked improvement after the players were given specific roles in recent months. Pakistan, which had made big changes to its side following the Asia Cup final defeat to India earlier this year, bringing in Abdul Samad, Babar Azam, Usman Khan and Naseem Shah, defeated South Africa at home in a three-match T20I series and then won the Tri-series, also involving Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka, last month. "In my personal opinion, I don't see any major changes in the national T20 squad before the World Cup.—*PTI*

T20I: Focus on Gill and Hardik returns

This series marks the start of India's formal build-up to February showpiece against NZ

CUTTACK, 8 DEC

The return of Shubman Gill and Hardik Pandya will lend fresh sheen and much-needed completeness to reigning world champions India when they begin their official march towards the home T20 World Cup with the opening match of a five-game series against South Africa, here on Tuesday.

This series marks the start of India's formal build-up to the February showpiece, where they will play 10 T20Is five against South Africa followed by another five against New Zealand before opening their title defence against the USA at the Wankhede on 7 February.

The defending champions will look to enter this phase with clarity of intent as they refine roles, streamline combinations and settle the XI that will carry the weight of expectations in front of home crowds.

India has been a formidable T20I unit post their World Cup triumph in the format last year, where they won eight matches in a row to lift the title.

Since then, they have extended their tally to 26 wins with only four losses, including a seven-match streak during their Asia Cup victory in Dubai.

They have not lost a T20I series in this period, and with only minor tweaks needed, they will be hoping to sharpen the edges against the side they defeated in the T20 World Cup final.

Gill's return comes after he missed almost a month of cricket owing to a neck spasm suffered while attempting a slog sweep during the opening Test against the Proteas.

But for Gill, who has 837 runs from 33 T20Is at an average of 29.89, this series also doubles up as vital preparation heading into the ICC event.

Shubman Gill and Hardik Pandya PHOTO: PTI

INDIA VS SOUTH AFRICA T20I

INDIA vs SOUTH AFRICA
Match starts at
7 pm IST

HEAD TO HEAD AT CUTTACK

PLAYED:	34
INDIA WON:	18
SA WON:	12
NO RESULT	4

Hardik opening bowler, gives us a lot of options: SYK

India captain Suryakumar Yadav on Monday believes Hardik Pandya's return will restore the tactical depth and balance that shaped the team's Asia Cup surge when the world champions take on South Africa in a five-match T20I series starting here on Tuesday. The ace India seam-bowling all-rounder, who sustained a left quadriceps injury and missed the Asia Cup final, is fully fit and in fine form after making his comeback in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy.

His timely return ahead of next year's T20 World Cup has brought back the much-needed flexibility and balance, with his new-ball spells offering India the cushion to field three, even four spinners. "I think that experience will count a lot. His presence will definitely give a good balance to the side." —*PTI*

India fined for slow over-rate in second ODI

India were on Monday fined 10 per cent of their match fee for maintaining a slow over-rate against South Africa in the second ODI in Raipur.India lost that match as South Africa squared the three-match series at 1-1. India won the ODI in Visakhapatnam to clinch the series.Richie Richardson of the Elite Panel of Match Referees imposed the sanction after KL Rahul's side was ruled to be two overs short of the target after time allowances were taken into consideration.In accordance with Article 2.22 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to minimum over-rate offences, players are fined five per cent of their match fees for every over their side fails to bowl in the allotted time.Rahul pleaded guilty to the offence and accepted the proposed sanction, so there was no need for a formal hearing.

ISSF WORLD CUP FINAL

Zoravar finishes 7th as India concludes best-ever campaign

DOHA, 8 DEC

Zoravar Singh Sandhu finished seventh in the men's trap final with seven hits in the first 10 targets, as India concluded their best-ever campaign at ISSF World Cup Final with six medals, including two gold, here on Monday.

World Championship bronze medallist Zorawar was the only Indian representative on the concluding shotgun day at the Lusail Shooting Complex.

Zorawar entered the final, which now comprises eight shooters instead of the earlier six as per new ISSF rules, with a score of 119 in qualifying, which gave him sixth place over 125 targets.

In the 30-shot final, he could not get his act together and was among the first two, alongside Italian Giovanni Pellielo, to bow out. China topped the standings ahead of India, with four gold and nine medals. The USA, with their double gold in men's trap and skeet on the day, came third. Among India's high points of the campaign was a stunning gold by Simranpreet Kaur Brar in the women's 25m pistol and a return to the top of the podium of Suruchi Phogat, who won the women's 10m air pistol gold.

India also registered a first first-ever double podium finish in an ISSF World Cup Final, when Sainyam took the first of three silver medals from the campaign for India.

Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar in the men's 50m rifle 3 positions and Anish Bhanwala in the men's 25m rapid-fire pistol were the other silver winners. —*PTI*

SMAT: Tripura upsets K'taka in Super Over

AHMEDABAD, 8 DEC

Tripura on Monday slayed domestic cricket giant Karnataka in a Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy fixture at the Narendra Modi Stadium Ground 'B' in Ahmedabad.

Karnataka, having won the toss and elected to bat, scored 197 for six in 20 overs. Opener BR Sharath top scored with a 20-ball 44. In fact, his 57-run partnership with captain Mayank Agarwal in 34 balls ensured the side got off to a fiery start in the PowerPlay.

Tripura responded in style. First, Hanuma Vihari and Sridam Paul added 65 runs for the opening wicket. Even though Vijay Shankar faltered, skipper Manisankar Murasingh played hero once again, scoring a 35-ball 69.

The Tripura star almost carried his team over the line but succumbed to a run-out with two left to get off the last ball.

Tripura players celebrate Karnataka wicket PHOTO: PTI

In the Super Over that followed, Paul scored 16 off the four balls he faced alongside Murasingh to take the team tally to 22.Murasingh returned to bowl as Karnataka lost Smaran Ravichandran for a first-ball duck, following which Abhinav Manohar and Macneil Hadley Noronha could manage 18 off five balls.

Haryana beat Bengal to enter Super 8s, Punjab also qualify

Mohammed Shami's impressive figures of 4 for 30 went in vain as Haryana comfortably beat Bengal by 24 runs in a group C game to enter the Super 8s of the Syed Mushtaq Ali T20 tournament here on Monday.

Haryana (+0.409) finished the group league engagements with 20 points and qualified as the second team from the group behind Punjab (+2.716), who logged the same number of points but had a better net run rate.Shami finished the tournament with 16 wickets and, on the day, was once again instrumental in polishing off the Haryana tail, restricting them to 191 for 9. This was after Haryana were 170 for 4 in 17 overs.

In this edition of SMAT, Shami has been very effective at death-barring the Punjab game when Abhishek Sharma took him to cleaners. —*PTI*

Woman who blackmailer Heung-min jailed

SEOUL, 8 DEC

A woman has been sentenced to four years in prison for blackmailing soccer star Son Heung-min, a South Korean court said on Monday.

The woman, identified only as Yang, was charged with extorting 300 million won ($204,000) from Son in 2024 after sending him an ultrasound photo of a baby that she claimed was his and demanding money to stay silent. She later conspired with a man, identified as Yong, to try to extort more money from Son. The Seoul Central District Court on Monday said Yang "lied" to Son, although she hadn't confirmed whose child she was carrying. The court said Yang denied the charges of extortion and attempted extortion. Yong, who confessed, was sentenced to two years in prison. —*PTI*

2026 T20 WORLD CUP

Jio Star may withdraw from ICC media rights deal

NEW DELHI, 8 DEC

Jio Star has informed the International Cricket Council (ICC) that it intends to withdraw from the media rights deal for the tournaments, just two months ahead of the 2026 T20 World Cup in India, throwing the cricket body in a crisis. According to information reaching here, the move comes despite two years remaining on the four-year contract, reportedly due to significant financial losses.

Following this, the ICC has restarted the sale of media rights in India for the 2026–29 cycle, seeking $2.4 billion. Reports also said that despite the ICC approaching major media giants like Sony Pictures Networks India, SPNI, and Amazon Prime Video, no one has showed interest due to the high pricing.

It is also said that if the ICC is unable to find a new broadcaster, JioStar will have no option but to fulfil the remaining contract until 2027.

Despite being a major broadcaster in India, SPNI believes the ICC's price tag is still too high. In fact, the network has taken a cautious stance on big-ticket cricket rights despite already owning substantial international properties, which include the Asian Cricket Council package worth around $170 million, New Zealand Cricket rights valued at $100 million, and England and Wales Cricket Board rights exceeding $200 million.

However, such has been the pressure on the Indian sports media landscape that Sony was compelled to sub-license the digital media rights for the India-England Test series in July and August of this year to JioStar to mitigate financial risk. —*PTI*

Chess: Pragg qualifies for Candidates 2026

CHENNAI, 8 DEC

R. Praggnanandhaa won the FIDE Circuit 2025 on Monday and secured his qualification as the only Indian man in next year's Candidates tournament.

While Praggnanandhaa will be India's sole male representation, three women from the country, Divya Deshmukh, Koneru Humpy, and R. Vaishali, have qualified for next year's Women's Candidates.

The Grandmaster from Chennai has arguably been one of the best male players from the country this year, clinching titles at the Tata Steel Masters, Superbet Chess Classic Romania, UzChess Cup Masters, and London Chess Classic Open.

The Candidates 2026 tournament will take place between March and April. —*PTI*

SYDNEY SUPER CUP

Chelsea to play Spurs in historic Sydney first

LONDON, 8 DEC

English Premier League heavyweights Chelsea and Tottenham Hotspur will meet for the first time outside Britain next year when they face each other on a pre-season tour in Sydney, officials said Monday.

The London rivals have signed on for the "Sydney Super Cup" with Chelsea also meeting A-League side Western Sydney Wanderers while Spurs play Sydney FC. They will then face each other on 1 August at the 83.

Chelsea will play Tottenham Hotspur for the first time outside of Britain next year PHOTO: X/@CHELSEAFC

"I've heard all about our passionate fan base in Australia, and it's something the club is very proud of," said Spurs manager Thomas Frank. "I can't wait to experience that for myself." Chelsea is also bringing their women's team, spearheaded by Australian superstars Sam Kerr and Elie Carpenter, for a match against a women's A-League All-Stars side on 12 August. "The 2026 Sydney Super Cup is set to be a fantastic exhibition of world-class football," said A-League chief Stephen Conroy. "It's a great opportunity for the international talent across our leagues to test themselves against giants of world football." 000-capacity Olympic Stadium. —*PTI*

- The London rivals have signed on for the "Sydney Super Cup" with Chelsea also meeting A-League side Western Sydney Wanderers while Spurs play Sydney FC

Global Chess League 2025: Anish to play for Alpine SG

MUMBAI, 8 DEC

With the Global Chess League making its debut in India from 13-24 December at Mumbai's Royal Opera House, Alpine SG Pipers will head into Season 3 with an impressive lineup combining world-class experience and emerging talent.

Alongside Giri, Alpine SG Pipers' lineup consists of a mix of top international players, World No. 3 Fabiano Caruana and Hou Yifan, as well as top Indian players, including R. Praggnanandhaa and Leon Luke Mendonca.

Amongst its key international players this season is 31-year-old Dutch Grandmaster Anish Giri, who is relishing the opportunity to play in the country of his heritage.

Looking forward to returning to India once again, this time as part of the Alpine SG Pipers, Giri said, "I have been coming back to India several times recently, especially since more and more prestigious chess events are being hosted in various cities across the country.

"I always feel warmly welcomed, and it is truly special to play in front of audiences who are so passionate about the game."—*PTI*